





GYPSY DAYS.

This Volume is not issued as one claiming general interest. It is compiled from Notes made on the back of our Maps, and is now printed that my daughter's recollections and associations of our Gypsying Days, when she was from four to seven years of age, may be refreshed.

This edition is for her and her friends, is limited to twenty-six copies (one for copyright), and the type is distributed.

This is Number .

"The Oaks," Caŕenovia.



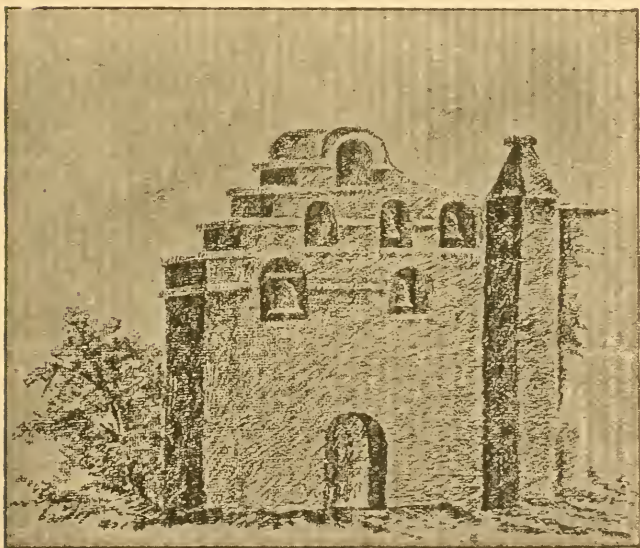
Hart Dome and Glacier Pond

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GYPSY DAYS

IN

COLORADO, CALIFORNIA, FLORIDA
AND THE CANADA BUSH

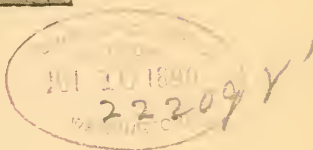


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GYPSY DAYS.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER many months of "nervous depression," that most annoying disarrangement of the system that simulates a hundred ailments without yielding to the treatment for any, the order came from a physican, wise beyond question, "Go back to semi-civilized life to heal the wear and tear of modern existence, and the enervation of office care."

Banished in this manner from office, home and social surroundings, to the recesses of deep forests, the shadows of cañons and the summits of mountain ranges, — all connected with nomadic life immediately assumed commanding interest,

to the complete exclusion of the wearying routine of business thought that had become exhausting to mental elasticity.

Less than a century ago, nearly all the occupants of the narrow border lying between the Atlantic Coast and the vast and unknown forests that hid the prairies of the West behind a thousand miles of pathless shadow, were pioneers. They sat before huge, open fires that consumed the trees cut from the new "clearings;" enjoyed venison and trout from the adjacent forest still rich in gifts of nature; and used furs taken from the "varmints" that worried their flocks. They were hardy yeomen, vigorous, and full of the energy and purpose that has worked such wonders all through a land then hardly dreamed of, — a domain not suspected by the keenest minds, one hiding under the mantle of woodlands — by the margin of unknown rivers, amid the mists curling over mountain ranges, and in the mysterious depths of deep ravines — such wealth of mineral, animal, forest and agricultural product as has since rewarded a vast people with fortunes like those of necromancy.

To these settlers the blaze on the home hearthstone offered radiated heat as a camp-fire; the

huge chimney drew away all foul air, while fresh breath whistled through the cracks of window and door unimpeded by double-sash or weather-strip. An electric bell did not in that primitive time summon a servant to put on coal, or turn on steam, to save a luxurious person from the fatigue of lifting a foot from an art-cushion. Then a few strong blows of the axe, and wood was brought in, accompanied by a whisk of fresh air and a few sparkling snow-flakes, to crackle on the andirons, to warm the folk with wholesome heat.

Half the powers of the air, the earth and the Devil had not then been summoned as slaves by science to vex the brain, suffocate the lungs, unstring the nerves, and let unused muscles forget their purpose until their energy should be lost forever. Gas, coal, steam, electricity, and their increasing kith and kin of light, heat, force and wonder-workers, were minding their own business in unsuspected concealment, and ordinarily when a man wanted anything done, he did it himself: in the present period of mechanical progress and complication, he does not do so if he can command mechanical aid.— We are elevated, conveyed, transported, lighted, heated, shampooed,

half killed and brought to life again by a myriad of mechanical, chemical, electrical and diabolical contrivances, each of which in its evolution has softened many an inventor's brain, and prevented the hardening of the biceps of many a man who knows not the appetite that fresh air and labor formerly supplied, or the sound dreamless sleep that open-air life secures to those who are weary in body but unvexed in mind. But now the keen-edged axe, the steam-driven saw, and the fire from the locomotive, all urged on by eager nervous American haste, have so gnawed, cut and burned away the woodlands that he who seeks a vast contiguity of shade must carry an umbrella between his head and the sun for many miles before the widespread forest silence is found that alone satisfies the nomad woodsman.

We should save parts of our glorious forests before they are all gone to the sawmill, or ground into pulp to bear the records of murders and rascality that will be printed on fibres torn from poplars and cottonwoods that whispered peace only along the wandering streams, before they are used, wasted and destroyed as a spendthrift scatters the fortunes of a productive past. May we not hope that coal, aided by natural gas, will so far

replace wood as a fuel, so cheapen the production of iron and steel and extend their uses as substitutes for timber, that we may yet rescue some of the magnificent American forests from the steel of the lumbermen or the more fatal steal of the land-grant railways ?

Where to camp is already a vexing question : so rapid and far-reaching has been the continuous invasion of the superb woodlands that — fringed with palms and magnolias on the south, with cottonwood, birch, cedar and willow on the north — were an inheritance from the great past, when nature clothed the land with varied verdure and no offending purpose was known to wreck her handiwork.

To the Adirondacks we have often wandered to revisit scenes that come as welcome and as fresh to memory after many years, as catkins of the pussy willows come after a long winter as harbingers of spring ; but the lovely lakes and deep forests that lie under the shadows of Mt. Marcy, and the companion peaks, have lost their virgin charms. Forest fires have worked wild havoc, the trout have been carried out salted in barrels by men to whom a salt trout was a reminder of cod-fish and as such more valued than the conscious-

ness of having left the surplus of good luck to flash their jewelled sides in the amber-colored waters of the woodland, to live, increase, and reward to a proper extent, future rambles.

The deer, too, are few and wary. Hunted in and out of season, with an endless persecution of long-range rifles, powerful lights and hounds, they find little chance to breed; while in the winter on crust-bound snow they fall before the cupidity of pot hunters for the sake of their skins alone.

Ere long little will remain of the noble game animals of our varied land, outside of museums; and he who seeks rest and recreation, coupled with those stimulating excitements of the chase that render hunters forgetful of fatigue, heedless of danger, regardless of exposure and as hardy as Indians, will have to travel far and wide to find an undevastated domain.

It was, perchance, the "missing link" that said so truly that a "monkey knows not the value of his tail until he loses it;" and we will know too well the value of the woodlands when they are cut away, leaving wind-swept, sun-burned barrens, where verdure, shade and prattling streams once gave the charms that soothe weariness with softened lights and half-audible silence.

CHAPTER II.

COLORADO.


WE had been idling away days at Manitou, gazing at the lofty crags of Pike's Peak, wandering through cañons, and wondering again and again at the fanciful forms in stone in the Garden of the Gods, when a famous hunter, Mr. Link, came in from South Park with a very exciting wagon-load of game : deer, mountain sheep and other noble forest animals.

The sight of this load of game so aroused our hunting spirit that we left Manitou in a strong wagon with a constant sky-line of ears appertaining to two diminutive mules, and started for a ranche on the Platte River, distance thirty-four miles. The day was clear and crisp, the warm sun had removed all the traces of a recent snow-

storm except from shady nooks, and so warm were its rays that our wraps were soon thrown back. Our route was through the famous Ute Pass, then the best of all the entrances to South Park, and an important thoroughfare for mining, Indian, and Government supply trains. The old time-worn trail has been improved by modern engineering, and a road cut along the rocky sides of the chasm for some miles, opening most beautiful scenery. For some twenty miles the ascent was almost constant until at Hayden's Park the road attained an altitude of nine thousand feet and over. Pike's Peak was a constant object of interest on our left, from here not a peak, but a long massive ridge of stone rising in abrupt cliffs. On the sky-line, wreaths of drifting snow showed against the blue like frayed lace-work. The timber line is very strongly marked, all vegetation ceasing at one elevation, no margin of low shrubs gaining a hold beyond the dark masses of spruce and balsam growth. The forest limit is about twelve thousand feet ; seven thousand feet higher than on the White Mountain range. Ranches are built at nine and ten thousand feet, and snow rarely remains long upon the summit of the pass where exposed to the sun. At lunch-time we

opened our baskets by a clear spring, made a fire for heating our coffee, and sat down to enjoy it on dry ground with no feeling of chill, within six feet of a snow bank that remained from a recent storm.

Just as the sun set and the full moon rose, we commenced the descent into the Platte Valley; most enchanting views opening before us of half-wooded plains, surrounded by range upon range of serried mountain lines, all catching the last rays upon their glittering peaks. Guarding each side of the road are huge masses of rock, one upon another, two hundred feet high, rising far above the pines, known as the Twins; and looking between them the view was one suggesting landscape gardening, so picturesque were the groups of dark pines, and so clear and broad the sweep of natural lawns. The road was perfect, dry, and as smooth as those of a park. So we spun along, our mules on the galop, the crisp evening air fresh upon us, until with one lovely view succeeding another the day passed away, when under the full moon every romantic feature of the landscape was enhanced in weird beauty and unreal character. A few small cottages were scattered on the bottom land, where from open doors and



windows flashed the warm rich light of burning pitch pine, reminding us, with its ruddy glow and fragrant smell, of evening views in the South.

No impression of recent occupation is received from this peculiar land. The fields are as fair and free from stump or mound as English meadows; the trees stand singly, growing wide and free as trees only grow where there are no rivals for their share of sun and air: while all that art would do in obedience to the dictates of taste, nature has worked out in long centuries, with no eye to admire the graceful results, unless some Indian felt an appeal to his better nature in the widespread beauty.

Soon we came upon the Platte River, and were at the door of Mr. Link's ranche, where we unfolded our wraps, and soon were toasting before a huge blaze of pine that filled a wide-throated chimney.

The next morning, a fair, bright day, I started on horseback, with Mr. Link, to hunt for deer, leaving the "we" of our party at his ranche. We rode up a wide valley, and after a few miles came upon steep foot hills, mountains in our ideas; and now riding up, now leading our horses over stony banks and ledges where it

seemed beyond the power of a horse to go, we wound our way among scattered pines, carefully scanning the slopes for game. After a time Mr. Link proclaimed deer in view, and levelled his rifle for me to sight them over; but it was some time before I could see the herd. The air was so clear that the hillside they were on seemed very near, so near that I looked vainly for large forms, and only after close examination saw what looked like rabbits among bushes, really large black-tailed deer among pines, when I realized the distance that was so deceiving. We urged our horses down the hill and along the valley, smashing through thickets of willow and quaking asp, eager to get the wind in our favor, well aware that deer are far more dependent upon smell than sight or hearing for warning of danger. When we felt safe in regard to the warning breath of the light wind, we turned up a spur of the hill where the deer were seen, and after a steep pull dismounted, picketed the panting horses, and started to stalk the game we had discovered. No more beautiful ground can exist for this sport than these mountains, rising into a crisp high air that stimulates every sense and braces every muscle; where fatigue passes away

after a brief rest and new impulse comes with each hour's effort; where the rocks and scattered trees afford concealment without shutting in the view, and firm rough ground gives good footing for the scramble; but it is a fair fight with no favor, and he who gets game must work for it. No hounds can here drive the deer to easy shots from some concealed resting-place, nor can a guide paddle up and hold the deer by the tail until, after many misses, a ball terminates their agony of fright. They are as free as air, keen and alert, and their capture calls for guarded but prompt action, united with the hunter's most profound strategy.

Mr. Link was most proficient in the chase of all mountain game, uniting with remarkable physical energy and endurance a great fund of information, enabling him to tell with seeming instinct where game would feed, rest, or run, and he was rarely in error. "These deer," he said, "would work up the mountain, if not around it, before we reach their pass, then to a second spur." To head them we made our ascent as rapidly as we could, halting at times for breath. We were in time; for in the snow that remained in the shade there were no tracks, and sure

that they were below us we full-cocked our rifles and crept along a commanding ridge, watching eagerly every bush and opening. After a little we found their fresh trail, and followed it as it wound about the mountain, expecting every moment to come upon them; for they were evidently not hurried or alarmed, as at times they wandered slowly around, apparently wishing to lie down for their mid-day rest; but we crept after the trail a long time, up dry sunny cliffs, and sliding down banks on northern slopes, where no sunlight fell to carry away the snow. We were disappointed to find after an hour of difficult stalking that they had crossed an open gulch, and ascended a second mountain.

Mr. Link said he would climb it if I would watch a pass, which I did; but the herd evaded us by going just under a ledge out of sight, yet very near. Rejoined by Mr. Link, we slowly dragged our now tired limbs over the rocks to points where he had frequently found deer, and at last concluded to separate: he to follow a ravine, I to cross a crest. We had hardly parted when from some low shrubs several black-tail deer sprang up: one a large doe, facing me at about one hundred yards. I drew a careful bead and fired,

and seeing her rear fall over backward and go sliding down the hill on her back, with her heels wildly flourishing in the air, imagined her done for, and sent a second shot hurriedly at long range after a buck that was watching with wondering eyes the strange antics of his companion. This shot went wildly, as did one from Mr. Link's rifle, which cut a branch over my head on its way, and the remainder of the herd disappeared with long graceful bounds. Turning to bag the doe, great was our astonishment to find her *non inventus*, while Mr. Link and his dog hastened along her trail, plain enough from showers of blood. She had fallen down the cliffs, gathered her feet under her at the bottom, and with last energy gone flying down the mountain side, going so far that we reluctantly abandoned pursuit, Mr. Link feeling that instinct would guide her to the river where we would find her. Again, on the summit of the mountain, we divided to stalk different sides of a long ridge. Mr. Link was hardly out of sight before his rifle rang out once and again. I watched eagerly for flying game, but none came to my side of the range, and I arrived at our rendezvous without incident, where I built a fire and kept warm as the

shadows grew long. After a time Mr. Link came up bearing a fine venison, and said he had hung up another, leaving a mitten with it to frighten away coyotes and wild-cats. With weary steps we sought our horses, mounted with the game before us and rode home, enjoying the moonlight in the valley of the Platte.

Our second day's hunting was about the same group of mountains, where we made a long detour among the bushy ravines, seeking to find the lair of some bears that were reported as being in the vicinity. We saw no deer, but came upon elk tracks quite fresh, and after a long rough ride came in bringing the second deer, shot by Mr. Link, and the doe I shot the day before, which we found by the river, just where Mr. Link said it would run. She was hit hard in the head, and it seemed incredible that she should have run so far.

A snow-storm of some inches prevented any pleasant hunting for a few days, and made the deer move on, so that we found very few signs in our daily tramps.

When the first fair day came, we set out for a range not before hunted, and, separating, hunted each side of several peaks. Leading my old nag

"John" around one sunny mountain side, I came upon deer tracks in abundance; leaving him under a pine, I set out guardedly upon the fresh trail, and gradually gained a summit commanding a wide view. No game was in sight; but I heard the report of Mr. Link's rifle echo amid the crags, and after a little he came up on a return trail and reported that he had seen the herd on a ridge below, probably alarmed by our coming, and had shot two at some three hundred yards before they could determine the source of danger.

We secured these, hung them up, and set out on the trail of two fugitives: a large buck and a doe, whose flying bounds over rock and log, often down many feet upon sharp stones, made us wonder at the strength of their slender legs. We followed over a ridge or two, when Mr. Link said, "They will probably go up to the next summit and lie down where they can look back upon their trail;" and, carefully peering across the next ravine, we discovered them watching their track: so we drew back guardedly, left our horses, and made a long detour, hoping to surprise them in spite of their cunning precautions. Step by step we stalked their retreat; but the wind played us false, veering around for a storm,

and a shot at fleeting forms was all we had at them; but in a moment we saw two other deer bound up an opposite slope, and when far up stop still and look back. They were a long way off, some three hundred and fifty yards; but I drew an aim and fired. They did not move, and I took a second shot, while Mr. Link wrestled manfully with a jammed cartridge and spoke his mind freely during the contest. With but one remaining load, having dropped my coat and cartridges to get rid of weight, I would not risk it again; but Mr. Link, having with his hatchet freed his gun, raised his sight and fired again, — a splendid shot, the larger deer falling dead from cliff to cliff. This made him three deer within an hour, all killed at over three hundred yards.

Disappointed with my two shots, I tested my rifle, a fine one by W. & C. Scott & Sons, and found that I had done it injustice, by distrusting its power at such long range, and over-elevated it. Had I fully appreciated its great range and power, I should not have overshot the deer as I did by ten feet.

This hunt terminated our expeditions for deer, and we commenced arrangements for an elk and

bison hunt, as I was anxious to see these fine animals, even if unsuccessful in killing them.

A novice in Rocky Mountain hunting must expect very unsatisfactory shooting from his arms, however perfect they may be, until he becomes accustomed to the transparent air. Objects are more distant than they seem, and one is always deceived in elevating for long-range distances until practice renders the new atmospheric conditions familiar.

CHAPTER III.

COLORADO.

LEAVING Madame and our daughter, a little gypsy, learning rough life at seven years of age, at Mr. Link's ranche, we set out for an excursion to the more remote and unfrequented mountains of the Tarryall range, whose red peaks were seen distant against the northern sky. Our outfit of tent, saddles, provisions, tools and guns was stowed in a strong wagon, where we found a comfortable seat on a pile of fur robes and camp blankets. Our horses were not rapid, but were selected for their hunting qualities, steadiness, surefootedness, and willingness to be shot from. A vehement use of condensed vernacular, the vigorous use of two whips, and some remarks that might in the distance have sounded quite like a

negro camp-meeting exhortation, at times roused them to a display of "action," and for a few rods produced a speed of a mile in fifteen minutes; but as we journeyed northward and gained elevation, several inches of snow covered the road, and we were obliged to be patient and spend a good deal of time upon each mile, amusing ourselves as best we could with stories of hunting adventures.

Mr. Link's experience was very varied and covered hunting of all kinds, from "birds" in Missouri to grizzly bears in the coast range of California; and his knowledge of the haunts and habits of animals rendered his detailed stories interesting to an unusual degree.

Our road was over a series of summits, each higher than the last, with deeper snow and more violent storm, until at last we were obliged to walk and break a path, through which our weary horses dragged the wagon a rod at a time. So thick were the fleecy flakes that it was not safe to get any distance apart, and for a long time it seemed as if we must get under some rocky ledge and remain until the storm should abate. After a long pull we reached a ranche, — a most snug one, — when we gladly abandoned any effort

to go beyond while the storm raged. The night came on with cold wind; but the following morning was bright and fine, and we were early on our way. The snow was lying light and pure, and as we went along we read on its surface a record of movements of many animals. A stream, Tarryall Creek, half frost-bound, was on our right: to drink from it, the wild animals had come down from the mountains early in the morning after the storm. Here were the footprints of rabbits and hares; again, creeping under the cliffs, two or three wolves had been. From almost inaccessible ledges, wild-cats and lynxes had sprung down, starting balls of snow that rolled along, leaving pretty prints on the white surface. Amid a clump of bushes was recorded the life-struggle of a "cotton-tail" with a weasel; in the trampled snow were the frantic footprints of poor puss in her efforts to shake off her deadly foe, and a groove where she had drawn the slender form of the "varmint" whose fangs were in her throat. At another point a "cotton-tail" had been surprised away from his sheltering rocks by an eagle, whose swoops he had evaded by bounds from side to side, until all the snow was quite beaten down. The low dashes of the bird

were marked by the strokes of wing tips on the snow, as he headed off every rush of frightened bunny ; but we were glad to see no fur or blood on the snow, and presumed the bird was baffled at last.

Three varieties of rabbits, or more properly hares, were seen, and a number shot from our wagon. The long-eared "jack," a wary fellow, wonderful in the awkwardness and rapidity of his flight, has some protection in being white in winter, as has the "snow-shoe" hare ; but the plump little cotton-tail remains brown, and is a victim to almost all predatory animals, from man to weasels, while owls and hawks haunt his timid life. He sits in implicit stupidity in front of his rocky home, and is so easy to shoot that only his excellence in a stew warrants killing him. The snow told tales of other animals, who, independent of night keys, do ramble late. Big bucks had come with high and dainty step to drink ; panthers ("mountain lions") had stolen along with noiseless but not unrecorded footfall, and coyotes — fearful of all, but more afraid of starvation — had sneaked about, looking for some sick animal or timid hare for sustenance. A few birds braved the cold mountain air, — grouse, magpies, and

jays, — and their footsteps made patterns on the snow as regular and dainty as if embroidered.

All these abundant evidences of wild life, with Mr. Link's comments and explanation of their habits, made our third day's drive more agreeable, and not at all weary we reached his son's ranche before dinner, a daintily-served meal, where we were much pleased with the gentle and affectionate ways of a tame antelope, a pretty thing with superb eyes, that courted notice and enjoyed it as much as a spaniel. Mr. Link's son Louis here joined us, and we went on and passed the night with a pioneer who had a very snug ranche, newly established. He was a keen sportsman, and usually supplied his table by carrying his gun when going for his cattle. His success was unusual, as will be apparent when we state that in nine shots he had killed eight fine mountain sheep.

An early start from the ranche took us to our camp-ground by nine the next morning, and soon, with Mr. Link and his son, we were mounted and en route for the mountains. Mr. Louis Link left us for a long detour through the haunts of sheep and bison. We went among some rough peaks for sheep. Herds of cattle were feeding on the

dead grass that came above the snow; but we were soon above their pastures and on the alert for sheep, the most wary and cunning of any mountain game. They live among the most precipitous ranges, and are fleet and surefooted where seemingly no foot can tread. Their gaze is usually downward, and rarely are they surprised, unless from some overhanging crag. Scanning every cliff and stone, we made our difficult way upward, our eyes protected by smoked glass from the danger of snow blindness, here very serious. Our horses labored hard and barely kept their feet on the rugged slope. All at once Mr. Link slid from his horse and motioned me to do the same. Crouching low and looking under the limbs of a low-branching pine, we saw two sheep on a rock some three hundred yards distant. Our horses were hastily tied together, and we crept up to the pine-tree, expecting a shot; but the wind played us false, coming up suddenly, bearing our scent to the game, alarming them so that they fled before we were within rifle range. We went on after them, hoping to get near them and then let our dog (a Scotch colley) go, with the aim of driving them to some rocky retreat where the dog would keep

them; but when let slip he soon came back, showing they had gone a long way on. We took the trail and followed it to a high peak, where, but for the unfavorable wind, we would have stalked them with success. As it was, we came almost upon them on an overhanging point, where they had stopped to overlook the valley in which they had been alarmed. Again we followed them; but the snow was waist-deep, and, with the needle of an aneroid barometer down to about twenty inches, it was too rarefied air for much hard work, and our rests were very frequent. Our trail led us among their retreats, where they had lain under overhanging rocks in the warm sun, and out on rocky shelves that were very narrow, and from which the downlook was hundreds of feet of dizzy precipices. These look-out points were hard to reach, but richly repaid the effort; for, spread far and wide, were the valleys and mountain peaks of endless chains. Near us huge domes of rock stood out from the mountain sides, a thousand or two feet high; far away over the foot-hills the South Park laid like a frozen lake, treeless and white, with a surrounding of sharp peaks, some brilliant in sunshine, others hidden by clouds and driving snow-storms.

The south unshaded slopes of these mountains were rock-ribbed, with bold cliffs and buttresses, all stern and grim, with hardly a shrub or tree. The north sides were black with a dense growth of spruce and balsam, up to eleven or twelve thousand feet, where all vegetation ceases, and the mountain tops bald and white with snow that is almost perpetual.

To such scenes do the mountaineers' steps lead in this beautiful country, filling days with pleasure, giving constant surprises and fresh delights, as the kaleidoscopic changes of season, of light and shade, pass over these eternal hills, conferring fresh beauties on familiar scenes, urging the rambler to new paths and fresh discoveries. Wandering here, vigor comes to every limb, weariness is forgotten: while the mind, filled with new and vivid sensations, springs up from past depressions and renews the power of keen enjoyment. Here, on our own continent, are rambling-grounds worthy of an Alpine club, and scenes that can never be exhausted: all so open that a carriage can pass far and wide upon the plains and foothills, and in the saddle almost any point may be safely attained. The game is certainly wary and not easily reached; but it is noble game, worthy

of every exertion, and if the game bag often comes back to camp empty, the days are not wasted that are passed amid such scenes, nor are disappointments serious that are accompanied with new health and every sense made keen. Forced to abandon the now alarmed sheep, we scanned the mountain sides from commanding points for bison, elk, or sheep, but saw no more; so we made our way laboriously to our horses and rode back to camp, where we arranged our tents, collected wood and laid down by the fire, listening to the wild-animal cries, while waiting for Louis Link's return. He came in long after dark, picketed his mule, and gave his report. He had been many miles often above timber line, where he had to break a road for his mule through the snow, and came at last upon three fine mountain bison: one he killed, a second was hard hit and left a bloody trail, which he had followed a mile, when night obliged him to return. This was cheering news, and after arranging to go in next morning for the slain, and perhaps for the wounded bison, we curled up in our blankets, which were soon covered by a light, dry snowfall.

CHAPTER IV.

COLORADO.

THE dawn of a snowy morning had hardly made visible the banks of our narrow ravine before we were in the saddle, making our way to bring in the bison shot the evening before. Our path was the margin of a small stream that had, in geological periods, worn a cañon through the mountains. A low growth of willows hid the brook, except where frequent beaver dams had flowed spaces that, filled with sediment, formed "beaver meadows."

The mountain slope facing north was densely wooded with spruce and balsam; the southern slope, too dry from exposure to sunshine, had but scattered trees, and upon this, where the dry grasses remained, cured into natural hay, we cast

our eyes as we went along in file, with the hope of finding mountain sheep. Mr. Link was in advance, with his twelve-pound rifle lying over his saddle, scanning with keen eyes the burned spots and fallen timber, when suddenly he sprang from his horse, and, resting his elbow on his knee, aimed carefully but quickly up the rocky cliff and fired. Our dogs rushed up the bank, and in a moment were tussling with a fatally wounded mountain sheep on so steep an incline that all came rolling down, together with dislodged stones and brushwood, an avalanche of snarling, yelping fur and wool. The animal was just passing some large rocks, giving Mr. Link no time to point it out to me, or even to wait my coming up, and consequently the only fair shot was lost. It was a fine animal,—agile, alert and thoroughly game, more so in many respects than the deer, than which the sheep is the finer trophy. Leaving it in the snow, observing the hunter's custom of laying by it some article that had been worn on the person, to keep off the "varmint" that recognize even by scent the presence of anything indicating man's royal prerogative to his game, we went on in the snow, that grew deeper as we gained altitude, until it was up to the stirrups,

and our animals could only make progress by putting first one and then another in advance to endure the fatigue of breaking a track. It was rough riding, stumbling over logs, stones and snow-filled hollows, and our elevation was becoming so great that our horses, as well as ourselves, breathed with difficulty.

To go light when an ounce soon becomes a pound, our aneroid barometer was left in camp; but by comparing our height with other ascertained points, we made our final altitude about 11,500 to 12,000 feet. When the snow-squalls drifted away we gained views of wonderful variety and extent through rifts in the clouds, that hid the wild scenes quickly again with their wreaths of mist.

Quite exhausted, we came at last where the bison had fallen, and thence followed a deep and blood-stained path, where the wounded beast had rolled over the rocks, beating down the deep snow; until we found the finest game animal we ever saw lying a mass of superb glossy black hair, with his white horns thrown back and his jet-black hoofs in the air, prone like a fallen oak.

How great a distinction naturalists make between the buffalo, or bison of the plains, and his

kinsman of the mountains, let them explain. Very little anatomical difference will probably be found; but the noble specimen lying before us was far finer in all respects than any from the low land, and well might he be: for his home was in the pure air of the highest mountains, where the sparkling water and fresh verdure of a brief summer, and the keen air of a long winter, would bring to perfection all the qualities of strength, fine coat, and sure-footed vigor that is so admired in game. A second one of the herd had been badly wounded; and had we brought up our blankets and provisions we should have followed the trail, now reluctantly abandoned.

The great head, skin and legs of the bison made a heavy load for one of our horses, a load that would have frightened Tam O'Shanter, or the schoolmaster of Sleepy Hollow, had they met it — head, horns, hoofs, and tail on a black horse by moonlight, — and the quarters were staggering burdens for our two remaining horses, one of which, as an Irishman would say, was a mule, a wily beast, who, when our eyes were turned, would quietly lie down and roll out from under his load, and then stand looking at it with a look of serene satisfaction, that was not disturbed by

the liberal amount of kicks and curses that accompanied the laborious work of hoisting the meat up again.

Our camp was now well supplied, and, wishing to try our disappointed hand at the elk, we broke up and went back to Mr. Louis Link's, whence, with two horses, our blankets behind us, and our mugs and tea-pot rattling on the saddle bows, we started after elk, expecting to sleep under trees and make our tea from melted snow, hoping by going light to overtake a band and win antlers as a trophy.

Before night we found a trail of eight elk, and followed it far enough to form an opinion as to where they were herded. Early the next morning we were up, and welcomed the sunlight as it came gilding the mountain tops. A spotless snow covered all, — valley, plain and mountain top, — and eagerly we scanned the wide outlook for game. A sneaking wolf was slowly making his way from one copse to the next, sniffing the air, evidently unsuccessful and hungry after his night's prowling, — the only living thing in sight except some gay magpies and camp-haunting meat birds; but as we were watching, a distant roar came faintly on the crisp air, and we recognized

the call of the elk, and a response from some listening rival. Quickly, indeed, was our light breakfast made, and we were off. Fortunately there was no fine old china to pack up, nor had we a hotel bill to settle with a leisurely swell clerk. It was only a last pull at the girths and fresh cartridges in our rifles, and we were urging our horses to the point whence came the elk calls. A few miles brought us to the hill where Mr. Link's long experience told him we were likely to find the game, and here the signs were abundant indeed. The snow was printed with many paths, some with hoof marks as large as those of an ox, but easily distinguishable by being longer, narrower and more clearly cut. Carefully choosing the freshest trail, one where there had evidently been a "monarch of the glen," with a royal crown of antlers, we followed it, our eyes peering into every thicket, with long pauses upon each knoll that gave us a chance to scan the valleys, and thus, with our rifles ready, we went for many a mile, or, to shorten a long story, for ten hours, only in the end to find that the band had retraced their steps nearly to our starting-point and thence gone away, perhaps alarmed by our having been there. Farther present pursuit we were unequal

to. Our horses were jaded from their long travel through deep snow, and with great regret we made our way homeward, our time not permitting another hunt; but so charmed with the life here, and so impressed with the variety and noble character of the game of the Colorado Parks, that a strong impulse remained to try it again, when more time might permit a long chase.

Going again, we would use pack mules to carry camp necessities, and then, once on the trail of elk, sheep, or bison, keep upon it, camping where night should find us, thus saving the weariness and waste time of going miles back to camp. Thus success in the end would be certain, and delays and difficulties merely enhance the value of the final triumph of a hunter's victory over the keen scent, alert eyes, acute hearing, and almost tireless speed of our finest game animals.*

* The years that have passed without this plan having been carried out, have seen the game animals of these mountain fastnesses practically exterminated, so much so that the inhabitants of the ranges will see them hereafter only where they are preserved in parks and museums.

CHAPTER V.

CALIFORNIA.

“A FOUR-SPRING is what you want, sir, two strong side springs, box well up for fording streams, a wagon that will carry sixteen hundred and not leave it in a heap,—a trap that two American horses can draw, or four half-breeds can buck before. Yes, sir; that is what you want, and we can turn it out in a month.”

This was sound counsel from a German wagon-maker, as he stood in the warm sunshine of February, in front of his shop in Los Angeles, giving a final summing up of a long-continued consideration of the best form of conveyance for a Gypsy trip through California, to be taken when the spring heat should fall on the ground still moist from the abundant rains of the winter of

1876, and summon the wealth of bloom and verdure that in Southern California is the growth of a few weeks of early spring, — a sudden overwhelming of luxurious vegetation.

March, the month of the “Mad Hare,” as all know, has few adherents on the eastern side of the Sierra, where it is regretted that he who “stole a March” did not steal them all, with their wrangles and struggles for mastery between the sun, the south wind, and storm-centres from Manitoba, each winning ground to be surrendered without conditions the next day, and so contending until April wins the cause of mildness and repose; but on the coast of the Pacific, March smiles with myriad bloom, wins our affection with all the wiles of soft and gentle breezes, and displays all the charms a lovely season can possess.

Sunshine later on, becomes actually wearisome; for be it known to ardent enthusiasts of blue sky and days of sunbeams that there *is* such a thing as too much sunshine, although it is not so stated in the manifold enumerations of the attractions of our Pacific margin. A week of serene cloudless sky is just jolly; a month is possibly delightful. But when one cloudless, rainless month repeats the monotone of another just as

dry ; when the shrubs wither and the fields assume the hue of bare earth ; when, if one cannot irrigate a garden, there is no resource but to weep over it (a task the clouds will not assume for many months of unmitigated sunshine) : there is just the faintest suspicion that there may be too much of so good a gift as sunshine. Moreover, in summer the air of the great valleys that lie between the Sierras and the Sea quivers with heat and rises from expansion, while the cold breeze from the Arctic currents just off shore rushes in to fill the vacuum and burns all vegetation from the western face of the coast range hills. Where there are openings in the coast range, as at San Francisco, this daily summer gale is as regular as sunrise, and it wafts the pedestrian gently from the street crossing with cool persuasion.

But stop, we have let our good wagon-maker stand while we are garrulous about climate,—a most unusual digression indeed ; for who is ever known to dilate regarding climate in Southern California ?

The vehicle was duly ordered and once under construction was subject to daily superintendence. Our lodgings, meanwhile, were on a terrace not

far from the old Pico House, accessible by stairs, or by a crooked lane that led by low old houses of the Spanish style, — cottages we would have forgotten but for the tall geraniums that flaunted their gay bloom before the second-story windows in unchecked luxuriance.

When we were not examining the wagon in its progressive stages, we had before us a charming view. To the eastward, from a porch, we looked upon the tiled roofs about the old church and into the convent yards, where processions of priests and nuns passed as the half-dozen jingling bells rang Spanish fashion their rather hilarious calls to devotion. As the eye was lifted, palm, olive and orange trees were seen on the borders of the town; beyond them a rolling plain that attained more and more bold contour until the hills became the foreground of the San Bernardino range, whose lofty summits, snow-crowned, were beautiful objects, giving an endless variety of sky-line and color. At times snow-storms would hide them in billows of cloud that were often made warm-hued and rosy to our eyes by the sun. The air, crystal-clear, made distance of little effect in even very remote objects: so, in all the changes of storm, shadow, sunlight and even

moonlight, the eye commanded an immense range of varied scenes all sharply defined.

Turning south and westward, the view was wide and open over the city to the Pacific, sparkling in the sunshine with the islands of Santa Catalina and Santa Barbara, objects of great beauty and interest. Looking at the islands through the shimmering light over the ocean, we saw constantly the optical caprices of mirage, under whose misrepresentations the islands assumed the most grotesque forms. They stood often repeated above their actual selves, sometimes right side up; but more frequently, in the illusion, the sharp mountain peaks were reversed, or at times the high points were cut off completely. These islands are now probably solid property, mirage included, held down by the price of corner lots, and their financial fluctuations as surprisingly phenomenal as the vagaries of the mirage that so magnified their picturesque outlines.

CHAPTER VI.

WE could not get away until the paint was dry on our wagon, and it took time to dry paint and varnish even in this land of superfluous sunshine ; although, in order to get them out rapidly, the plain facts about Southern California are often sent out nominally “unvarnished ;” but, for long endurance, wagons and statements are better for dry treatment.

One who has rambled through old Spain can well understand why Spanish occupation first obtained strong hold in so many sections of the New World. Looking from the top of a diligence as one swings along amid mountains crowned with walled towns of Moorish type and time in Castile or Grenada, the face of the land

is that of Southern California. The yellow poppies and kindred masses of wild bloom in fields bounded by hedges of Spanish bayonet are those whose seeds went with the germs of useful grains to the gardens of the Jesuits, who carried faith, civilization and agriculture to the missions on the Pacific : those old missions where olives still show their gray-green foliage over walls of cactus ; where oranges grow from Spanish or Moorish seeds, and the half-idle impulses of a mixed race repeated in varied ways, from early mass to cock-fighting, the good and the bad of Spanish inheritance, until the gold-hunting Americans came to replace satisfied stagnation by progress and all that progress means to a "live" Yankee.

To English or Dutch adventurers of two centuries ago, the rolling sun-burned hills and dry plains of California promised little. Neither their systems of agriculture nor their ideas of climate would fit : their plants would hardly grow ; so they sailed to the far north where dense fogs and abundant irrigation from above five days out of each week made them feel charmingly at home. We can imagine that, were the sunny State of California to be discovered in the royal present by an Englishman, he would term it "blasted 'ot,

don't you know ;" yet go on the parched hills with his trousers turned up, bearing a top-coat and umbrella, for a year or two, no more rashly inclined to adapt himself to new circumstances than he is to make a railway-car other than a series of coaches, or buy his ticket at other than a booking-office survival of ancient coaching days. What a lot of well-selected dead past a Briton does bear with him, and how oddly it fits California in its original form, where, nevertheless, many delightful young scions from good families of Old England are falling slowly but gracefully into new ways of great prosperity ! To the Spaniard, on the reverse, the climate, soil and vegetation, with all the proper seeds, systems and methods of cultivation by irrigation, were home taught and at once rewarded by success, while the simple-minded Indian inhabitants of the Pacific Coast offered a tempting and encouraging class of converts to a faith so attractive as ritual and gaudy ceremonial made the Church of Spain to their rude minds. There was little to unlearn or acquire on the part of the Spaniards in Southern California : hence the strong, early and lasting footing they obtained, — one that enabled them to impress their characteristics so deeply that

many of their customs will only pass away with the few remaining Spanish rancheros who still cling to Castilian ways of olden time. Their old mission of San Gabriel, near Los Angeles, is yet in a degree picturesque, with a high wall pierced for bells as a campanile, and when in its prime, with its irrigating system, gardens and possessions, it must have been an impressive structure to the lasso-slinging caballero and simple-minded Pueblo Indian.

The large irrigated orange is golden, more beautiful than luscious, or was when we lunched under the trees, eager to escape the equal discomforts of a hot sun and over-cool breeze ; but time and skill have now lessened the ratio of skin to pulp and juice, and it is a favorite variety.

It is modestly assumed that Southern California will raise everything, from great expectations to small fruits, and there is fair reason to grant a large part of the simple-minded claims so diffidently made for this semi-tropical region, where beyond question a rich and dense population will find prosperous homes, surrounded by a great deal that is extremely attractive.

But these are not considerations for Bohemian ramblers, so we will fit up the wagon to be ready

when the paint is dry. The front seat was high enough to give room for a trunk, and the foot-board was like that of a coach, leaving a space for grain-bags behind the driver's feet. The back seat had a white canvas top over strong bows, that always sustained all manner of loops, pockets and hooks for odds and ends. Under the back seat were spaces for boxes that contained supplies and our cooking "plant," which cost no end of thought and frequent conference with skilful mechanics; but all proved so well fitted for roughing it that a description of the traps may be useful.

A stove is an essential in California camping, where fuel is at times scarce, and where amid the wheat no unprotected fires are permitted while the great fields are ripening. Our stove was of sheet-iron, made without a bottom, and after use was lifted up from the ground, leaving the ashes. It was cleaned and turned over into a box that it fitted like a lining, really taking no room. All the varied cooking things were nested inside of it and went in safely. Each piece of stove-pipe was slightly conical, one went into another, and all were slipped over the tent poles, which were tied under the reach of the wagon. Our main

cooking-utensil was an original adaptation that saved us all fear of scorched oatmeal or burned rice, and also relieved us from the necessity of stirring everything that should be cooked with one hand while rubbing smoke from our eyes with the other. It was a water-bath cooker made square, to go in one end of the stove when packed, about nine by twelve inches, of strong tin with a copper bottom fitting the stove holes. Two cylindrical cans, one five and the other five and a half inches in diameter, went through the cover (sustained when in use by rings pressed around them), about two inches clear of the bottom of the main cooker. There were lids for these cans, and the same fitted the cover of the main cooker when the cans were not in use. All knives and forks were carried in the small can, that nested in the large one, which went in the cooker with room for all needed tin plates and many small traps. Thus in a small space our stove and cooking outfit were carried, and they never turned out a culinary failure, — can more be said of a complete kitchen? In making camp the stove was out in a moment, a fire roaring, and the cooker on it. A very comforting combination was jack rabbit in curry with potatoes, boiling in the main cooker,

and half-boiling, half-steaming rice in one can and oatmeal in the other, all going at once in a compact form on one hole of the stove, and no trouble. Oatmeal could cook all night; hot fire could not harm it; if the fire went out, the water remained warm for hours, so that there was one thing ready for early breakfast beside voracious appetites that needed no stimulant.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN we were about to start, our friends mentioned snakes, alluded to tarantulas, and spoke of centipedes. They told too, of bold highwaymen who had "held up" the stage twelve times on the coast range route within a year and had financial transactions with the passengers: so we were not unwarned of annoyances. To seclude ourselves from a low intimacy with creeping things, we arranged our wagon for sleeping accommodation. A light boarding made the support for a small mattress, and this was suspended from the bows of the wagon as an upper berth for the petite member of the party; while a longer mattress fitted the bottom of the wagon, all snugly canvas-covered, with reading-

lamps and many convenient arrangements wholly practical, as one night's use proved: after which we forgot snakes and their kin, none of whom even suggested themselves, and slept undisturbed in our tents.

The base of the upper berth had legs fitted, and with them in it served admirably as a table, as well as a rack behind the wagon top, when en route to support our mattresses and covers, all of which were rolled in great dust-proof wraps.

Three tents were carried: one for our own use, one for our men (driver and cook), and one for use as a dressing and bath room fully fitted for all purposes.

All these and many more provisions for comfort and safety were made when the time came to select horses. Horses were cheap and abundant, but good trusty beasts were exceptional.

Our first pair had one noble animal, strong, patient, handsome, and kind: a good average for a first attempt. His mate had no turn for business; his prominent idea was to pose as a model for statuary and paw the air as no horse should that had never seen the bronzes at Washington. He was sold at a loss without delay, and a big

solemn horse purchased to replace him at a street auction, and called Jerry, to go with Tom.

In time all was adjusted, bundles from half the shops of Los Pueblos de Los Angeles were stored, and we started for Santa Monica on a trial trip, with a driver of rueful countenance and a cook of unknown merit. En route a few damp places of adobe mud threatened to absorb our wagon; but we pulled out, and before evening entered a ravine that opened on the Pacific just north of Santa Monica, then in its flush of early growth, brilliant with unpainted roofs, and resounding with the racket of many hammers.

Our retreat was quiet and sheltered, with abundant shade, water and feed for the horses; the latter the pretty clover alfaleria.

As soon as our tent was up, a wild steer came rushing up as if to carry it away on his long horns. The cook was ordered to drive him away, but declined without hesitation, saying he was afraid.

Faute de mieux, I made a dash at him with a rail, and after a few threatening demonstrations he turned tail and disappeared, — the only really mischievous beast we encountered in all our rambles.

South of Santa Monica, in estuaries and

marshes, there were wild-fowl in great numbers. On the plain, plover ran about in immense flocks, while high over head sand hill cranes croaked as they wheeled in long lines. The beautiful top-knot quail were in the low thickets in quantities and often seen, always exciting admiration, with stylish head-dress and snug-fitting plumage.

Below Santa Monica the wind had driven pure sea sand into hills and hollows, making the most perfect and secluded spot imaginable for sea and sun bathing. The sand at the bottom of the cup-shaped hollows, which were some ten feet deep, was too hot to lie upon, but midway it was cooler. A plunge in the Pacific surf and a roll in the hot dry sand gave a bath and friction that no Russian bath could equal; and if the writer were to assume any one cause as a turning point to restored health, the sea and the sun baths of Santa Monica would be selected. Every nerve seemed grateful for sunlight; and may we not find a truth in suspecting that the myriad nerves and pores of the sensitive human skin need more sun and air than they ever get under the almost impervious dress of civilization?

Once, when visiting this unfrequented spot, a man was seen at a distance ploughing, followed

by a train of white as if his plough had uplifted a furrow of snow. Curiosity impelled a nearer view, when it was discovered that a flock of white sea-gulls followed the footsteps of the farmer, feeding eagerly on the grubs and worms exposed by the plough. These gulls were free from fear; for the good sense of the people prevents the destruction of useful birds, and the most harmonious relations exist. In San Diego, the gulls were the scavengers; they sat about kitchen doors ready for refuse, and did not hesitate to rush under one's feet for a coveted bit; they were as useful and far more agreeable in this capacity than the turkey buzzards of the southern Atlantic cities. In this connection it may be said that the show of wild-fowl in San Francisco harbor is very interesting to strangers. Popular sentiment protects all birds and seals within the limits of the city; and we were often amused for hours, while yachting, to see huge pelicans plunge in fearlessly among the shipping and fill their pouches with fish in perfect confidence within a few yards of us. Outside of the protected limits they are wild and wary, showing how wisely they understand the bounds of protection and danger.

Our days at Santa Monica were full of idle lotus-eating hours, passed watching the slow Pacific surf roll in, shooting wild-fowl in the lagoons, playing in the sand, and doing nothing with energy and success.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON our return to Los Angeles our wagon was strengthened, a new cook replaced the one afraid of cattle, who found safety in a restaurant; the few needful changes were made that were found desirable in our outfit; and we were again under way northward, with traps of all kinds in and under the heavily burdened wagon.

The second day found us in the park-like country so peculiar to California, where broad-spreading oaks stand alone, with all the stately beauty of trees that have had for centuries ample space to extend their branches free from contact with other growth. Among them were blooming shrubs, the Manzanita and Ceanothus, all naturally so combined as to produce the effects landscape

gardeners seek to attain, but rarely achieve except on the ancient estates of England. Here we began to see the large gay-colored woodpecker, that digs round pits in the bark of the oaks and fits an acorn tightly into each as provision for hard times, a prudent bird, organizing a savings-bank system. Another peculiar bird is el pay-sano, or road-runner, an habitué of the low thorny cactus, under which it finds a retreat where none can follow. It can rarely be forced to fly by a running horse, but skims over the spaces between the cactus-plants like a shadow, giving the observer but little opportunity to see the style and beauty the bird possesses. An unpleasant experience here was alkali water from a stream seemingly pure and brilliant. Our resources for drinking were limited, Apollinaris had not come as a boon to ramblers, and the native wines were too sweet and heady for a long drink. The art of making light wines had not then been generally attained; but now delightful clarets come from the same vineyards.

The Santa Clara River when we reached it was high and rapid, with quicksand bottom. In doubt as to the passage, we rested at the ford until some kindly Germans led the way, carrying part

of our load in their wagon. So deep were many fords that we were not more than above the flow in our high vehicle. San Buena Ventura, we passed on Sunday after a long drive through grain-fields and by pleasant homes. While our cook added supplies to our larder, we visited the old cathedral, where mass was being chanted. It is a well-preserved building with gay altar-tinsel and large paintings of the usual churchly character.

At the stony ford of the San Buena Ventura River, emigrants were resting in camp, the women washing travel-stained garments, while the men repaired their harnesses or lounged about.

North of the river the road is on the ocean beach, which is pounded hard by the swells that come many thousands of miles before breaking on this shore. For a few miles the available beach between the sea and the cliffs is very narrow and the passage must be made at low tide. The six-horse stages are unwilling to delay long, and many stories are told of their being driven through the surf with the horses hardly able to withstand the undertow.

The heat from the high cliffs with the reflec-

tion from the water made the passage almost suffocating, and it was a charming rest to reach Rincon, where a pure stream of good water runs into the sea and a pleasant camping-ground is near.

Drift-wood was our fuel. It gave a very brilliant light, and, after the sunset colors faded from the sea and sky, we sat by our fire which cast its glow on the foaming surf, until, soothed by its rustling, we gave ourselves up to the sweet sleep that comes most welcome to those who are day and night in the open air.

Each day of our rambling tended to enhance our enjoyment of gypsy life. It was characterized by freedom from the restraints and many of the annoyances of travel; and while there was a great degree of seclusion in our camps, we were often brought in friendly contact with interesting characters of a class that rapid tourists see little of.

At Rincon we were near a pretty vine-covered stage-station, where the event of each day was the arrival and departure of the six-horse coach. It came down the line from Santa Barbara at a gallop, and soon with fresh horses went dashing out along the narrow beach until it became a mere speck seemingly surrounded by breakers.

Our dressing-tent was erected on the beach, where an elastic bath-tub was inflated, affording us delightful sea-baths in water warmed by the sun. It was March ; but the waves that broke on the beach derived their energy from gales that came not with them ; all was warm, serene and beautiful about us. The coast trending westward was in sight for many miles beyond Santa Barbara, while the islands of Santa Rosa, San Miguel and Santa Cruz were picturesque in the offing.

At times the mirage lifted the Ana Capa Islands from below the horizon, and as we watched those interesting scenes, now and then a sea-lion would raise its dark head from the ocean just beyond the surf and gaze steadily at us with dark eyes of almost human intelligence.

Our cooking was admirable, thanks to a Swedish servant ; our appetites needed no enticing dainties, flowers of many hues were on the table, while the sparkling stream was our finger bowl. After our meals we rambled along the sea under the picturesque cliffs and failed to count the hours until reminded of time's passage by hunger.

Shells, sea-weeds, and beautiful zoophytes in sprays like ferns, were drifted to our feet by the

slow-beating surf, and the days were full of interest. Aroused at times by a demi-tasse de café noir from idleness and semi-somnolence, we drove along the beach for miles ; but this was the extreme limit of exertion. After the sunset-glow, Venus, the evening-star, cast a brilliant ray along the sea ; while a distant revolving light winked at the celestial goddess in the most impertinent manner, until she hid herself in the waves from which she sprang.

We breathed climate, basked in it, praised it, and sorrowed for all who were in the slush of March as the month is conducted on the Eastern coast ; but one night our climatic enthusiasm was checked most rudely for a short time. — We came in about sunset from driving under the cliffs, and the moment we emerged from their shelter we were caught by a gale ; it was a “dry norther,” that under a brilliant blue sky raged and roared like bedlam on a spree. Our tents were flying wild, fire was belching from the stove, the covers and pipe were blown off, and our cook was spread out like a star-fish, holding a hot pot in one hand, the stove with another, his feet seeking to keep the tents from flying away, and his nose pinning light articles to the ground ;

while sand was drifting along like snow over and into all our possessions, and the gale snatched and buffeted like a storm-centre condensed within an acre. Efforts to corral things were in vain. That wind could pick up small stones, while a sand-blast from a neighboring mound filled our ears, eyes and mouths with flying grit. Fortunately a glen was near, where an hour's hard labor placed us under a high bank over which the gale roared all night without reaching us.

The dry norther is devoid of the discomforts of ordinary storms, but possesses an especial selection of its own. There is no thunder or lightning or need of any; it speaks for itself, and like every product of the Pacific slope it is ample and complete of its kind. It dries the skin, cracks the lips, makes the hair brittle, sometimes it withers vegetation, and not rarely causes pneumonia and severe neuralgia.

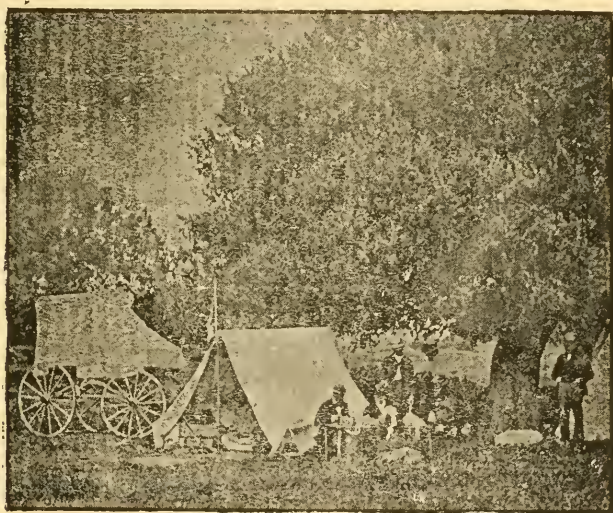
CHAPTER IX.

THE road from Rincon to Santa Barbara, sixteen miles, was swept clean by the gale which was still blowing against us as we drove along, meeting dust and pebbles migrating before the wind in the direction of Mexico. Dusty and ruffled in raiment and temper, a retreat under an oak-tree in the outskirts of the town was gratefully occupied, and the remainder of the day was given to removing a strata of soil from our persons. After an encounter with the dust of a "dry norther," a tourist might be platted for city lots,—an expedient suggested to speculators.

Our protecting oak was the abode at night of a large bevy of the pretty top-knot quail. They seemed to disregard the proximity of our tents

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and commenced at dawn to cluck and gossip in Volapük about their plans for the day and the affairs of Santa Barbara. They were so confiding and amusing that we were reluctant to dis-



turb them by rising before "sun up," an instance of self-denial that is conceivable under the circumstances.

Santa Barbara is old and new. The old is thoroughly Spanish: red tiles on low buildings sustained by bamboo rafters, picturesque and interesting; the new represents the school of the

scroll-saw, planer and ready mixed paints. The city, however, has probably as many solid attractions to win those who can choose new homes as any point in the United States.

Points Arguella and Conception give the cold coast currents that flow from the north, an off-shore course, leaving the bay between the shelter of the Santa Inez Mountains and the picturesque islands a summer sea, a small Sargasso, where the water circles until it becomes warm and imparts less chill to the sea-breeze than is felt farther south.

The railway then was far inland, so that Santa Barbara long enjoyed immunity from the hurrying crowds and confusion that follow the howl of the locomotive. An amphitheatre of beautiful mountains surrounds the happy valley where the village lies in protected isolation; and here, whatever may be the tastes of a rambler, be he a mountaineer, botanist, sportsman, yachtman, relic-hunter, or given to swinging in a hammock, he can indulge all of his fancies without going far from his cottage or his camp.

The climate in winter will compare most favorably with that of the Riviera, with much less "ice in the sunshine" in summer; and during our

stay we knew little but blue sky, mild air, with a gentle surf breaking on the sands. There was no suggestion of storm, cold or uncertain weather, so that all plans for excursions were made without the weather-permitting clause that casts a shadow of doubt over the best-laid schemes of mice and men in the old States. There had been very heavy rains in January and February, that secured to the soil a supply of moisture for abundant crops; but later in the season the high sun would fall heavily on fields bare of verdure. In the spring all vegetation revels in sunlight that for two or three months is not too strong for the water within reach of deep roots, and the burst of leaf and bloom is wonderful.

The oft-used term, "a carpet of flowers," is not strained in March and April; they spring in such masses from the soil that they give color to the landscape like sunset clouds laid upon the hillsides. We gathered them until our arms were weary with constant fresh delight in new and beautiful varieties, and often our wreath of wild-bloom was added to by gifts from the owners of successful gardens. Very kind were the people of Santa Barbara to the strangers in camp, to them unknown. No name was on our wagon or traps,

our only token was a small yacht flag that waved over our tent; but they were not inquisitive beyond finding opportunity for generous hospitality.

One morning in our camp as the little table was being set for breakfast, we saw a large sun-bonnet moving through the tall grass and flowers, seemingly invisibly supported. As it drew near we saw under it a charming little girl toddling along timidly with a basket which she summoned courage to bring to us, "a few fresh rolls that Mamma thought we might enjoy," all covered with dainty napkins and fresh flowers. One evening a tall figure, that might have stepped from the pages of Cooper's "*Leatherstocking Tales*," came to our camp-fire bearing a large frosted cake smothered in roses,— "a little offering from his wife to the campers."

He was a most interesting old man, erect and wiry, with small evidence in his step that he had been for over seventy years on the frontier, from the time when Western New York was borderland. He had been a bold invader of the unknown West before the Indians had dreamed of yielding to the White Man, and his wild-life tales made our hours about the camp-fire very interesting.

One evening a little group of new-made friends gathered about our fire, talking of memories of the old Eastern homes and of the expectations of the new Pacific States: among them the old hunter, who, Indian-like, coiled himself nearer and nearer to the fire as the night air grew cool. He was seemingly lost in thought when one of the party asked us of our Eastern home.

In reply we named one of the fair villages of the lake region of New York, feeling that it would be an unknown name, so far away; but the old hunter caught the name, and slowly arising from the ashes until he seemed in the dim light a towering form, he raised his hand and brought it down upon his thigh with a report like a rifle, and exclaimed with emotion, "Stranger, I was borned thar!" Little had he known of his old home for over half a century, and the camp-fire was oft replenished before he left it, so deeply was he interested in reminiscences.

His tales of men and things were like tradition to the writer, who heard more of old local and family history from this old pioneer than any living person could tell; for few or none

remained from the time when the old man, then a boy, had turned his back upon the hill-top village that for many years was only a slender memory of civilization mingling in his wild life.

CHAPTER X.

OUR route out of Santa Barbara led over the Santa Inez range,—a picturesque sky-line of mountains on the north. During our stay we had added to our cavalcade two saddle-horses: one Billy Gray for ladies' use, kind, intelligent, and ever faithful; the other a sturdy gray Gypsy, with enough mustang blood from half-wild ancestry to make his physique perfect and his temper quite the reverse.

Our preliminary trip was to the foot of the mountain where we camped, beside the road under superb oaks. The night's rest was varied by driving a troop of invading colts away from our picketed animals, where they seemed determined to become entangled in the tethering ropes.

This led to an early arousing for the mountain trip. Well aware that it would be a hard pull, it was arranged that the reliable saddle-horse should carry two of the party on the ride-and-tie plan: Gypsy, our new purchase, was to aid by bearing a pack; that is, we made that plan without consulting him. His saddle was of the Vaquero style, high pommel, having a great deal of sheer fore and aft, with many rings for lariats and saddle-bags. The cargo was miscellaneous: the bath-tub in collapsed form, bags of loaded shells and cartridges, a lot of "canned goods," and a general selection of what the cook termed "hefty stuff." As pound after pound was added, and turn after turn of the long cinch was drawn tight, the mustang stood with legs stiffly apart, in the attitude of a saw-horse, with seemingly no more spirit.

Finally all was arranged: the result — a great corded mass of luggage, leaving only the ends of the horse visible. A gentle pull at the end of a long lariat, accompanied by a "Come, Gyp," started him, aroused him, developed him, as pulling a lanyard awakens a cannon, and he responded. The writer held the rope, and in an instant was flying a kite or, more truly, a nebulous formation,

for Gypsy was "bucking"! Bucking is a composite action. It has movements aptly chosen from those of birds, fishes, snakes, fleas, squirrels, kangaroos and bats, with figures from the german, the flying trapeze, and points from Catharine-wheels and chasers. They are simultaneous in execution, and no instantaneous plate is made that would define any one distinct outline during action. It was grape, cannister and small arms at the end of the rope: cords were bursting, hoofs cracking on the hard ground and in the air; bath-tubs, cartridges and "canned goods" were radiating with centrifugal force from a storm-centre of great intensity, with rapidly increasing risk of a general explosion. Madam's horse, fortunately, surveyed the scene calmly; but her mind was full of apprehension that the display might become contagious among our horses, when suddenly Gypsy came down rigidly on four stiff legs and stood like a bronze statue, quiet, complacent, triumphant. Either the horse or the saddle had turned over during the action; it was directly underneath the beast, while remnants of cords with frayed ends alone attested the load that had been so carefully packed. There was a suggestion in the surrounding débris that "Gyp" would

not assume the humble rôle of a pack-horse. The point was conceded, and the unsmashed remains collected on the wagon. "Gyp" represented fifty dollars in gold; how much he "bucked" us out of, we refrain from estimating. It seemed as if his cost would be fully realized by the satisfaction of leading him to a secluded spot and shooting him; but as we hesitated, the cook said he would ride him, and with self-remembering generosity we gave him the first chance.

Increasing attractions mark every step that carries one onward and upward on this road, one that would be toilsome did not widening views constantly open of land, mountain range, island, and summer sea,—all varied with rural beauty, and our depressed spirits rose again, as the charming impressions obliterated the vexations attending the start.

We were about half-way up, one of our party in advance to meet the heavy coach then due and secure a passing place, as it would come down the mountain like an avalanche, when another manifestation of equine perversity brought us to a halt.

Old Jerry balked, not with the indecision of youth or the impetuosity of sudden suggestion,

but in a quiet, stolid manner that was evidence of mature purpose. He had been dwelling upon the idea for some miles, and now struck work with a coolness worthy of a "walking delegate," K. of L. He chose a narrow place and held the gap like a Roman, utterly oblivious of suggestions that, commencing piano, rapidly rose in crescendo to forte. He was reminded by the whip of the need of progress, while being addressed in language full of the "big, big D's" of the vernacular, and the abundant "r-r-r's" that distinguish the vehemence of the Spanish aids to comprehension. We had heard that a mouthful of earth would divert a horse's mind from obstinate intent: so, regardless of future values, we put a corner lot or two in his mouth; but he would have taken a suburb without hesitation, no tender-foot tricks would move him, and the big stage was due at the narrow pass. It was humiliating to have so soon a second defeat, but then there was no choice; the horses were unharnessed, and the wagon run back to a plateau just as a coach full of pleasure-seekers came swinging along on a gallop, with brakes set and traces loose.

But it was not half bad after all! Lunch was set on a rocky ledge, a bottle of the red wine of

the new vineyards cheered us, myriad flowers of familiar and novel form and hue were all about, while the golden sea and forest-clad valley made a return to Santa Barbara no sacrifice. We were vagabonds, with no aim beyond open-air life day and night ; in such air, amid such surroundings, delays were added enjoyment.

CHAPTER XI.

OUR driver, Ferguson, a most skilful horseman and excellent man, was called in council after lunch, and the conclusion was reached to return to the Cathedral Oaks, a lovely spot, and there, with feed and water at hand for our horses, arrange our plans.

Our camp there was a most attractive one, under the Gothic arches of grand trees, with a running brook at our feet. A very beautiful pointer had joined our cavalcade, not even the threatening of the long whip would drive him away, and at night he came and curled up at the tent opening, a most faithful guardian. We advertised him, but no owner responded.

A second council held before our camp-fire led

to our buying a very fine horse that Ferguson knew of, and a lead harness.

With some stout boughs and copper wire, we fashioned a set of lead bars while awaiting a wagon-maker's better work, and Gypsy and the beautiful new horse were gently trained to harness,—Gyp proving very willing and tractable so long as not subjected to the indignity of a pack. The result was that after a few days we emerged from the Cathedral Oaks with a very efficient and not bad-looking four-in-hand, that promised and performed good service.

Again we breasted the mountain road, with our horses rested, well-fed and in great spirits, and all went on smoothly until the spot was reached where we halted before. Here Jerry planted himself again with a confidence founded on past success, but his glory was evanescent indeed. Ferguson had brought his old six-in-hand whip with a stock as true in spring as a fly-rod, a lash of the most scientific taper, and a silken end made hard with wax. Gracefully it was swung aloft, writing mystic forms in the air; with a whistling of serious import the lash came swooping like an eagle, not on the horse's back, where whipping was an old-time sensation he had

schooled himself to meet, but with a flash like lightning it came up under him, lifting him like a shock of electricity high into the air, to return to the earth an astonished, reformed, humiliated horse. Later, on the Sierra, he would pull his shoes off and stay in the collar until his neck was worn; so it was evident that he regarded balking as a lost art, ever after this well-accented experience.

No Rambler can leave Santa Barbara, looking back amid the rocky turrets that are so picturesque on the crest of the Santa Inez range, without regret at leaving a scene full of beautiful and impressive features that never show so charmingly as from the last turn of the road before a descent is made on the land side of the coast range and the ocean is lost to view; but new attractions of novel beauty were at hand to divert our mind from thoughts that were a bit depressing. The sea side of the coast range has little verdure: cool winds, often laden with salt fog, seriously check vegetation; but the east slopes gladden the eye with a wealth of foliage that is full of novel effects to rambles from the old States. In March and April, all is in perfection: the dark green of the chaparral, the polished leaves of the myrtle,

and other trees having a burnished foliage, catching the light like silver, are mingled with the tender tints of new leaflets that add mist-like delicacy to the woodlands.

We removed the harnesses from our leaders, replacing them with saddles, which enabled us to ride on in advance to gather the flowers that were in myriads about us, to linger at attractive points and escape the monotonous motion of the wagon.

Not far from the summit on the route to the north, a grand spring bursts from the mountain-side in a ravine, and here we halted for a noon-day lunch. A party of charming Eastern people were picnicing in the romantic spot, who extended a hospitable stirrup-cup as we mounted to go on. Far below, a thread among the trees, our road curved and wound its way to the plains, which we reached in time to select a camping-spot for a two-days' halt, the morrow being Easter Sunday, a day we were glad to use for rest.

We found an ideal retreat where the chaparral of the mountain-side terminated in a wide expanse of plain; behind our tents a mountain brook went cheerily over the stones, and some venerable oaks gave widespread shade without shutting in the air as do ordinary forest-trees. The brook yielded

a few small but delicate trout, "Dolly Vardens," a gaudy variety peculiar to the west coast, especially distinguished by a band of pink extending longitudinally from the gills to the tail, equal in width to about a third of that of the fish. Here we felt no sea-breeze; the evenings were warm, tempting us to sit until late about our camp-fire, listening to Ferguson's tales of stage-driving on the overland when attacks by Indians were frequent experiences. He had not long before driven the stage over the road we were on, and on one trip saw three "grizzlies" passing where we were in camp,—deferentially the right of way was conceded to them. The dense, impenetrable chaparral affords such extensive retreats for bear, panther, and other more or less dangerous beasts, that they will long find refuge in the coast range. We felt safer with a double gun at hand when following the stream back into the dark ravines, and at night we always had two guns heavily loaded under the edge of our blanket; for the road agents at that time were bold thieves if tempted, but we were not deemed prey worthy of their attention.

Camp-life is not necessarily one of hardship or self-denial. Half the care and science needed to

make an ordinary home agreeable will render camping luxurious, safe and perfectly comfortable under such favoring skies as we enjoyed in California, and perhaps more details of our camp arrangements may be of interest to some readers. As to risk, it is very little. A vigor comes from exercise, fresh air and constant interest that wards away illness. More colds and lame throats owe their inception to the bad air of houses, to defective sewerage, dust from carpets, and the contagion of a coughing, sneezing neighborhood, than to fresh-air exposure; and as to the small dangers of life, a camp is exempt from more of them than any house contrived by man. One cannot fall down stairs, pinch fingers in a door, have a head broken by the failure of a picture cord, fall over a coal-scuttle, be caught in an elevator, killed by an electric wire, or run over by a herdic in camp.

It is not necessary to post notices of "Don't blow out the gas," "Don't stand on the platform," "Don't walk under a new building," "Danger," "Don't go to crowded theatres or towering flats," — in camp; and after a few days under canvas, the tent becomes a home with all home attributes, even if to-day by the sea, to-morrow by a mountain tor-

rent, and the next day under stately sighing pines in some remote ravine. Our arrangements were very simple. In early life the writer went often into the deep forests, carrying "everything needful," provisions for emergencies, and guns, rods and traps for all the forms of game known to natural history. Getting ready for these trips was simply delightful, as one thing after another was laid in due form in the packing cases.

Such ingenious things as were offered for all purposes in sportsmen's fascinating shops as *indispensable*, from pepper-pots of horn to telescopic rifles and interchangeable rods; bright with metal, new with well-oiled joints, and tempting to sight and touch, they were associated months in advance with the furry monsters they were to bring down, with the dashing trout they were soon to allure, and with the sumptuous repasts they would insure for the well-known (and sometimes alluded to) hunters' appetites.

A room was always given up to packing these lovely devices, where they formed a medley of the most picturesque details; but when they were once in the deep woodland, where one horse and one steer before a "go devil" was the sole means of transportation over boulders, roots, fallen trees

and slipping snow-banks, they were just a little difficult to arrange, even laying aside all artistic and æsthetic motives ; and if there lives a bronzed old woodsman who has not decorated many miles of trail with things that would not work when wet, were immovable if strained, and useless in an emergency where one cannot recall the proper manipulation of some unfailing inconvenience,—we have not met him.

First of all, in turning from the ways called civilized, find out what is *unnecessary*, and a long step is taken in becoming a gypsy.

CHAPTER XII.

OUR outfit was organized for service, and few changes were made after the trial trip to Santa Monica. Our wagon was perfectly adapted to the work and stood seven hundred miles of varied service with little or no repairs. The high driver's seat insured command over four horses and gave admirable space for carrying baggage. All trunks and boxes were fitted to spaces, so that there was no "shucking about," and when the spaces were filled there was little chance of anything being left behind. The table-top was hung behind the canvas that covered the rear seat, at an angle, and here was stored the bedding, light but bulky.

In many forest-camps we always found beds

of "hemlock feathers" better than any art could offer. Elastic, clean, free from creeping things, fragrant and wholesome, it has no equal for inducing sweet sleep; but the plains of California offered no provision of the kind, although the balsams of the Sierra were very good when obtainable. Hence it was necessary to carry mattresses. As soon as our three tents were up, india-rubber sheets were spread in all but the dressing-room tent, and even when the ground was seemingly as dry as months of sunshine could render it, these sheets were always wet on the under side when taken up. On these sheets the mattresses were laid, and soft rugs above them. A few cushions with gay covers, mission blankets of varied hues, and wall pockets, made the open tent rich in color and attractive.

Camp-chairs were set under the trees about the camp, where our table was convenient between meals for maps, books and correspondence. Our horses were tethered with long ropes to iron pins, to enjoy the nutritious clovers and grasses, which, with rations of barley, kept them in fine working condition. In the mornings they eyed keenly the tents, and when signs of life were seen, they neighed and capered like dogs with delight.

They differed widely in adapting themselves to being tethered. Some of them, if the ropes caught under roots or logs would stand patiently awaiting assistance; but Tom would feed in a forest around trees and stumps until his long rope seemed a snarl of hopeless intricacy, but he invariably worked backward and disentangled himself without cutting any Gordian knots. The presence of our faithful animals was always a source of interest and prevented loneliness, giving something of a homestead air to the wild situations we were often in.

A brilliant lamp in our tent made reading a pleasure in the evenings; and another night-light hung by the opening, where the faithful pointer nightly assumed a watchman's post as if detailed for the service. Our men were excellent, securing us every safety and attention, while the cooking outfit now tested for many days proved more than capable of equalling the best cuisine of the few hotels we dined at. Supplies at times gave out; but shipments from San Francisco met us at stated points, rod and gun brought trout and quail to the larder, and when all resources failed, a payment of a small sum would secure the right to shoot domestic fowls that could not be caught

in any other way, as they were quite as wild as the game of English preserves.

Ranches were many miles apart, but usually one was passed between luncheon and night, when milk could be procured. The Spanish residents conduct their dairying in primitive ways. To get a quart of milk, a half-wild cow would be lassoed and led to a post where a few turns would fasten the rope ; another coil would then be cast around her hind feet, binding them together, after which the quantity needed would be milked, and the cow turned loose to be milked again if needed, or not approached for days.

Yet with all this seeming lack of system, good butter was the rule and excellent bread ordinarily obtainable. When the latter was missing, oatmeal, rice, and various farinaceous foods were made extremely palatable by the perfect steam cooking of our multifarious utensil.

CHAPTER XIII.

ONWARD by easy stages over sand-hills at Arroyo Grande, by the interesting Mission of Santa Margareta, we made our way northward, every hour full of keen interest and enjoyment, galloping over the sod that was a carpet of blossoms, loitering under the great oaks whose shade gave moisture to a lovely blue flower (a flower limited to the ground under the trees, producing the curious effect of blue shadows), and camping every evening amid new scenes, all having enough variety to fill the twilight with pleasure.

El Paso de Robles (the Pass of the Oaks) is approached from the south by a road equal to a park-drive, through a vast expanse of plain where the grass is fed down to lawn-like keeping by

sheep ; indeed landscape gardening could add little to this beautiful spot, filled as it was with majestic single trees that only centuries could produce, with groups of blooming shrubs scattered in graceful outlines, and views of mountain summits over all.

We could gallop far and wide seeing neither fence nor barrier, where every hour's rambling made it more a mystery why these great oaks, many of them six or seven feet in diameter, should have found soil favoring their superb growth ; with no other trees, as in the East, crowding to share the space about them. Day after day of azure sky, soft air, brilliant twilight and assured immunity from coming storms made life a holiday. We rode and drove for hours, returning hungry to our camps, to eat and sleep as only those can who live in the open air. Health — ruddy, vigorous health — came to us all ; our hardened muscles seemed to know no fatigue, and as to nerves, we forgot their existence.

A half-day's easy drive from Paso Robles Springs brought us to the Mission of San Miguel, a large church with other buildings surrounding a quadrangle with one entrance only, indicating, in connection with old walled-up loop-holes, that

the arrangement had defensive as well as religious purposes in contemplation. One hundred years ago the buildings were evidently a much more imposing group, but time has left little to show their original extent beside the outlines of old foundations.

Birds very similar to our Eastern favorites were quite abundant in wooded districts, but some slight difference in color or unfamiliar notes made them practically strangers. Quail were in frequent flocks; so numerous, indeed, as to do mischief in vineyards. Driving rapidly along we often shot them over the heads of our leaders, but no second barrel could be used without endangering Gypsy's head, as he invariably reared at the report of the gun, although he made no effort to run. They are not an especially tempting bird for the table, but a few often came to good purpose, when our supplies ran low. Often no market was passed for several days, so that our gun and rod were our only resource for variety on our table. Once when all other schemes failed, a fat lamb was bought, with the result of unlimited feasting on curries and chops. A fat cotton-tail rabbit simmered in curry in the large part of the cooker, with rice steamed, potatoes ditto, brought before

us after a long ride or drive was not to be despised; but the long-eared jack-rabbits took too much violent exercise to be tender, and we ceased shooting them. Our pointer added miles to his daily course by chasing them, never seeming to become discouraged by their sailing over grain or weeds in long bounds that carried them out of his reach in a moment.

The route up the San Antonio was through a very lonely but picturesque country, the few ranches being occupied by the original Spanish Indian half-breeds, a seemingly harmless population, but many stage robberies in this wild region indicated that the "road men" were in a country where they found protection and assistance in their raids on the express boxes. We were supposed to carry no money. Our men were paid at the banking-houses of the larger towns, and they usually paid our bills for us from their earnings. Once, as we will recount later, we were actually out of cash, all pockets empty, no grain in the sacks or supplies in the hampers, no known friends to call upon.

From the sources of the San Antonio, quite high on the east side of the coast range, we passed to the head-waters of the Salinas, which

runs northward to the Bay of Monterey, where there is a wide break in the coast range through which the sea-air chilled by Arctic currents is drawn to fill the vacuum caused by the heated air rising over the sun-scorched plain of the San Joaquin Valley. As this cool air passes over the land, its temperature is rapidly raised : consequently it covets moisture and derives it from every possible source. It hardens the skin, which is at the same time sun-burned and chilled, the hair and nails become brittle, and there are many discomforts. Trees grow only in ravines where some moisture remains, and they do not hold their heads much above the banks that protect them. Bird and animal life is not abundant on the plains, and the few specimens that exist adapt themselves to the exigencies of their habitat. The ground squirrel is common and a pest. He resembles the gray squirrel of the East, with a less superb tail ; but a glorious tail to balance and guide him in leaping from bough to bough would be of no value, for he has not the trees to sport upon ; he burrows in the ground where possible moisture is found ; if not, he is at least out of the wind. This loss of the plume-like tail of the squirrel of the forest is an instance of the weakening of

an unused member. Our experience would suggest that a squirrel with a full bushy tail, such a plume as curls over the backs of our home bunnies, would possibly be blown away by the gale as is the flying spider by his parachute web. A small mud-tinted bird runs in the ruts of the road when they are deep enough for shelter, flying only when forced to. He has no visible feathered companion; for the only other bird observed is the burrowing owl, who does not suggest social character as a prominent trait as he sits on the mound by his hole in the ground, turning his head around so fast and far that it is a source of wonder that he does not wring his own neck. A most amusing habit has this especial member of the family of wisdom: it is a most pronounced and constantly repeated bow or, more correctly, courtesy. It is not the bow of welcome or the nod of hospitality; it is curt, rapid and definite, conveying plainly the hint: "Good-bye! Good-bye!! — Don't wait out in the wind. Good-bye! — Good-bye! — Why don't you go on?" Sad would be the lot of beast or bird on the Salinas plain, that possessed no hole in the ground for refuge.

CHAPTER XIV.

FRESH supplies awaited our arrival at Soledad, where we halted only long enough to select our route eastward.

Two were offered, neither very tempting: one around the spur of the San Benito range, where we would face a gale of dust-laden wind; the other back on the east side of the Salinas River, over the range of the San Benito. We chose the latter as more picturesque and sheltered. It was a prudent choice, although the road led along the Bitterwater, a little rivulet as clear as air, but so full of alkali that our horses would not approach it. At midday on the Bitterwater our thermometer nearly reached 90°; in the evening a cool gale blew the sand, and rendered necessary

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many extra blows on the tent-pegs to drive them deep enough to hold the stay ropes. Down the San Benito, with thirty fords to the Pinoche, was difficult driving. Late high-water had rolled bowlders into the few passable parts of the river-bed, the round stones made footing too uncertain to encourage the use of our saddle-horses, and only Ferguson's skill and unceasing care carried us through safely without breaking a buckle.

Approaching Hollister we found the valuable lands fenced in, leaving no wayside corners for gypsy tents, nor rich alfaleria clover for the horses; so we accepted the hospitable welcome of a farmer and camped in his grounds, where seven bright children surrounded us with friendly curiosity, offering us their aid in little ways.

In all our wanderings we met with this constant kindness: fruits, flowers and dainties were sent to our tent by those who knew nothing of us, and we could only acknowledge the favors by small gifts, a supply of which we always had on hand. Offerings of money would have offended the generous people who, having in nearly all instances had long camp experiences, were prompt in hospitality to wayside wanderers.

We rested long after the rough, fatiguing drive

of the San Benito and Pinoche, giving the day (Sunday) to much needed rest ; but we were a little disturbed on making our inventory to find ourselves out of nearly all supplies and totally out of money, our men having expended theirs also. We knew no one within a hundred miles, while our needs were immediate and pressing : food for our horses, everything for ourselves, and wages for our faithful attendants.

There was nothing for it but "cheek." The horses were given an extra grooming, the harness a long omitted polishing, the wagon was washed, while we put on our best flannels and as many evidences of civilized life as one trunk could afford. The empty wagon was a light load for our four best horses ; they snapped it around the corners of Hollister just as the good people were going to church, and we were soon in the business part of that prosperous place. Inquiries for a banker secured the information that the post-master was the person to see. He was fortunately in his office, where a mass of mail awaited us ; and with a confidence we could not have expected, he said he would take our checks ; in fact, he wanted checks on the Bank of California for various amounts, all of which we drew, and soon were in

funds again. Some accommodating dealers admitted us to their shops, which were of course closed for the day, where we found all needed supplies and delicacies, laden with which we drove triumphantly back to cook a royal lunch, blessing the hospitable men of Hollister.

Later we mounted our saddle-horses, and, followed by our wagon, rode by cultivated fields a few miles to the famous old Pachaco ranch, a pleasant camping-place.

Resuming our march the next morning, it led by a well-made road that followed a bright stream to its source among the moss-covered rocks. Arriving at the summit, we were delighted to see a vast expanse open to our view, the rich San Joaquin Valley with miles of golden wheat ripening in the sun, lying map-like below us ; over and beyond rose the ragged sky-line of the Sierra, white against the deep blue sky and wonderfully beautiful. With map, glass and compass we sought to place the Yosemite Valley and its surrounding peaks and domes, our far-away objective point ; but amid a myriad of bristling peaks, no one could be identified at the distance we were from them, — at least one hundred and twenty miles.

In many features, half barren, half luxuriant, this view reminds one of the outlook from the towers of the Alhambra, where beyond the dusty plains of Granada the snow-peaks of the Old World Sierra surround the valley where the luxurious Moor and fanatic Spaniard hated, fought and persecuted, enriching the sun-burned soil with the blood of men fitted for better work than Crusade or Inquisition cruelty.

Even in the valley of the San Joaquin, then lying before us, there have been quite too frequent raids of half-wild "road agents" and Vacqueros, who have dashed into villages on their mustang horses, threatened and terrorizing all who offered resistance with point-blank shots from repeating rifles, and swooped away with all the valuables they could carry on their ample saddles.

Our horses had abundant time to stretch their necks and rest before we were willing to leave this commanding point, and go downward on a winding road to the San Louis ranch, where a small army of men were shearing great flocks of sheep.

Eastward from the San Louis ranch, which is on the edge of the valley, we passed through seemingly endless wheat. The winter had favored it with profuse rains, and it grew in superb

abundance to the wheel tracks, our horses nipping the heads as we drove along.

The widely isolated houses of the wheat sections were not attractive or home-like.

No tree or shrub grows about them : there is no shade, no shelter ; the houses, as Starr King said, "have no roots;" they are simply set on posts, with the rubbish of the place cast under them. No barns of any extent are needed for housing crops, valuable machinery is left anywhere, and the cereals are harvested and stacked in the fields where they are safe from storms.

As we were spinning along over the hard roads through the wheat, watching races between our pointer and jack-rabbits, our leaders made a quick spring and carried away the lead-bar ; but Ferguson's strong pull wheeled them instantly around, and we found ourselves at a stand-still, with four horses oddly facing each other.

Stripping the harnesses from the leaders, we put saddles on them and rode to Dutch Flats, where we went into port for repairs that detained us some hours.

CHAPTER XV.

A KINDLY spirit of accommodation alone induced the wagon-makers of Dutch Flats to make us a new set of lead-bars, for they were driven with work. Surrounding the shops were the huge agricultural implements of the valley, — all novel to the Eastern eye, but very efficient on the boundless level plains we were crossing. The crop to be harvested was a very fine one, and every available machine was being made ready.

A Californian is ready to do anything but walk. It may be a little overstating it to say that, if a Californian desire to go half a mile to a village, he will go a mile to catch a horse to ride on; but it is not wide of the mark for a statement bearing upon a matter connected with

the booming Pacific slope, where one cannot convey an adequate idea of the truth without expanding a good deal.

All the ploughs, harrows, reapers and implements of the wheat-fields are designed to enable one man to use the power of a number of horses : wages are high, horses abundant and cheap.

Four or six horses draw a gang of ploughs, with a driver occupying a spring seat ; four horses drive a header that cuts the golden wheat from the straw while standing, while especially made wagons travel alongside to receive it and convey the heavy grain heads to stacks where they await, safe from rains, the threshing engines.

A rainy winter means a good crop ; a good crop is the source of great prosperity, while a poor one means borrowing money at one per cent. per month until good times come again. Little is raised beside grain : so the farmer is largely a purchaser of nearly all his family consumes, and unless money is realized from grain sales, there is not much spare cash available.

A few hours' residence in Dutch Flats furnished us a great deal of interesting information regarding agricultural processes and prospects, as well as a set of guaranteed lead-bars, and we spun on

again wiser and safer to Hill's Ferry, where our outfit was ferried over the turbulent San Joaquin that was brimful from the melting snows of the Sierra. The ferrymen would give no information regarding the condition of the roads beyond, but were sullen enough to enjoy running the Styx transit. Beyond the ferry false channels, filled with water, crossed the road, — treacherous pools to ford. Even after exploring them with our saddle-horses, it was not easy to get our high wagon through without flooding its contents. Here and there fine Mallard ducks were feeding in overflowed lowlands, and enough green-headed beauties were bagged to furnish variety to our cuisine.

A few miles of half-dry land, half water, brought us to the Merced, a broad, rapid stream, turbulent with the water from the Yosemite and Sierra snow-fields, now thawing rapidly under the warm May sun. Again a flatboat rope-ferry carried us over to camp under wide-armed oaks whose shade and shelter were refreshing after the dry, shadeless plains we had been traversing for many days.

Our route the next morning led along the south bank of the Merced River for several miles, where

the foliage that marks the river-borders protected us from a gale that was blowing.

On the unsheltered plain in advance we could see clouds of dust long before we reluctantly started out upon it. We spread a canvas to shelter us from the sun and driving sand while we lunched, and hurried on over a most unattractive, semi-barren country, the home of horned toads and tarantulas. Nothing can be more mechanically perfect than the trap-door with which this huge spider closes his hole, lined within with web, covered without with sand to correspond with the adjacent surface, fitting so as to keep out water and defy detection. We pushed a small twig into one opened by chance, when the spider seized it and pulled as fiercely as a dog would. One of our party, in digging a plant from a sandy ledge with her fingers, was pulled back rudely (as I saw the long legs of a tarantula moving in the soil as its burrow was invaded) just in time to avoid a bite—a bite that is always painful, if not serious. The body of this giant spider is the size of a pigeon's egg, the legs extend four or five inches when spread, and it is altogether an object of terror and disgust. The horned toad, or more properly lizard, has a certain style in his ugli-

ness, and is an amusing pet. Our petite had a four-in-hand of them carefully tethered to stakes at our camp, and they lived many months with us.

Very agreeable was the change from the stormy, wind-swept, arid plains, to the foliage of the foot-hills, where a most beautiful and interesting succession of varied vegetation is seen, changing in a marked manner with increasing altitude.

The manzanita, with dark red stems, seems to have no bark, so smooth and round are the diminutive trunks of the shrub that is abundant on the lower levels of the foot-hills: while blooming and beautiful in May is the ceanothus, or wild lilac, with flowers of varying shades of blue. Various and very interesting pines are met with. The digger pine, with a peculiar cone large with hooked points, and the Coulter pine are first seen on the outlines of the vast giant forests of the higher altitudes.

Our first camp among the hills at the base of the Sierra — hills that would be mountains if not so overshadowed — was one to be long remembered. It was on a knoll that commanded a wide view; one side was precipitous, the tops of trees

growing on terrace below terrace, opening no view to the bottom of the gorge, a dizzy down look, but very striking. The ground we were on sloped so decidedly that our wagon was tied fast for fear a gust of wind would send it a thousand feet or more below, and our tents were staked with unusual care, which did not prevent our men's tent from starting with a puff of night-wind to explore the dark chasms below us. Only their prompt action rescued it from an aerial flight.

Our tent was full of flowers new to us, while a shrub growing all about imparted the most delicious fragrance to the vicinity, an aromatic odor exceeding incense in sensuous gratification.

As we lingered long over our evening meal, the full moon rose from the Sierra peaks, lighting so wonderful a scene of wild, romantic character, — one so full of all the picturesque features of snow-summits, dark forests and suggestive depths, that it was late before we were willing to close our curtains upon the enchanting view, — one we rose early to enjoy again when daybreak opened new beauties as the light penetrated the shadows below us.

Our memories held delightful pictures of camps under rustling palmettos, under sighing spruces of the far north, amid snow-clad pines and the white birches of the great lakes; but no memory, indeed no fancy, can equal the perfection of the camp-life attainable on the Sierra slopes.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARIPOSA suggested the early gold craze. The town, with one-story shops provided with bullet-proof iron shutters, has been a miners' centre for buying supplies, for gambling away the fruits of success and for glorious sprees; but rocker-gold mining seems now to have passed into the hands of Chinamen, the profits being only a fair reward for hard labor.

Some miles beyond Mariposa we found a way-side halting-place where milk and cake were daintily served. Here we were told that we could reach Clark's, the "Big Tree Station," before dark (it was then three o'clock), and that the summit before us was but seven hundred feet: so we pushed on confidently, although we had a

lame horse and were using our best saddle-horse in the harness.

Onward and upward we pushed, new trees, new flowers and novel forms of rock arresting our attention during frequent halts. As we ascended, the size of the trees increased rapidly. Single specimens, larger than we had ever seen, appeared in the thick growth that clothed the mountain-side. Golden mosses, vines and lichens, all beautiful, made us forget time until the sun was near the crest of the distant coast range, when we consulted our aneroid barometer to learn that we were some three thousand feet above the little lunching *châlet*, yet the summit was not in sight.

The road was a very fine one ; at times it led far into the mountain-side to complete the circuit of a ravine, crossing narrow gorges and laughing brooks, then out into the light again around bold spurs of rock, each turn showing a more extended view, far over the San Joaquin Valley, to the coast range, where we had driven so many days, until, as the sun went down, we thought we could see it through the break of the highland, made by Monterey Bay, sink into the Pacific.

The last rays lighted a most novel scene. We had finally reached the summit and the home of

the great trees, which stood tall and stately, some of them covered with golden moss that made them resemble the gilded pipes of a great organ, others dark and sombre. They were not the giant sequoia, but the hardly less impressive sugar-pine, Douglas spruce, cedars, and their giant kin that so overwhelm us with surprise and annul our preconceived ideas of forest-trees. There were fallen trees about us whose mammoth stems prone on the earth could not be overlooked from our saddles. In the deepening gloom they seemed more monstrous than they were, to our unaccustomed eyes, and we felt conscious of sensations like those of Gulliver in Brobdignag.

Masses of snow still rested on the road, to the terror of our horses. Raised in Southern California, they had never seen winter, and from this novel substance under their feet, or from scenting some wild beast, they screamed with fright, the thrilling sound a horse rarely utters,—one we had never heard before, nor wish to listen to again.

We had to lead them over the soft path of pine needles ; and to induce them to cross the bridges over the mountain torrents, that were sheets of white foam, required all of our skill and patience, as they called and answered one another ; but

when it grew dark, they surrendered themselves to management with a trust that was almost child-like, and pressed as closely as possible to our shoulders, as we felt for the path we could not see. Horses that have been picketed about a tent, fed from the table, as ours often were, are companions day and night, and are ridden far away from their native homes and familiar scenes, assume relations of affection and dependence that are very interesting. They become more like dogs, clinging closely to the movements of the party if permitted, and wild with alarm if separated from it.

Knowing nothing of the long road down the mountain, our progress was slow and uncertain until the moon rose, shedding a faint light through the trees that held their dark tops often two or three hundred feet above us. At last we saw the gleam of the lights at "Clark's," a snug hotel; but Madame and La Petite declined to seek the shelter of a house, late as it was; so feeling for a level plateau with our feet, we turned aside into the forest, where in half an hour we were as much at home as ramblers can be.

By the light of a reflecting lamp we found a few sugar-pine cones, each one a handful. A

dozen made a brilliant light which La Petite kept supplied with fresh fuel, while the horses were picketed and the tents pitched. Really as rapidly as it can be written, a gloomy forest-nook was transformed into a cheery home, where over a roaring stove various good things were cooking, while a camp-fire illuminated the interior of our tent with a glow that brought out vividly the warmth and color of the gay blankets and crimson cushions. The transition from darkness, fatigue and anxiety to surroundings so luxurious and cheerful always accented our camping after a long day's travel, and enhanced the enjoyment of food and rest. Weary as we were, we sat for hours burning the huge cones to flash light far into the forest, and chatting over the day's events before we dropped back on our blankets to sleep. It was late before we awoke the next morning to see, before we had separated our dreams from the reality of our situation, the face of an Indian squaw steadily peering at us through the folds of the tent.

CHAPTER XVII.

"CLARK'S," or the "Big Tree Station," is on the Merced route to the Yosemite Valley, and the nearest point to the Mariposa Grove of "big trees." Stages daily passed our camp laden with tourists, nearly all of whom were making the trip as rapidly as possible, eager to see the salient points of the valley and be off and away.

Yet there were many inducements to linger and enjoy the great forests, to breathe the air so full of the soft odors peculiar to evergreen woodlands, and rest surrounded by superb scenes. Winter amid the mountains is very much in earnest. The fall of snow blocks the roads until often the only egress is on snow-shoes; but May sees a beautiful spring casting lavish favors of verdure and bloom

broadcast, and those who can linger among the ravines have loveliness all about them.

Four miles away, through the sombre forest by a trail that saddle-horses can follow, the giant sequoias stand. We mounted our horses,—Ferguson with our gipsy girl of seven years before him on sure-footed Sam, Madame on her faithful Billy Gray, the cook following on Jerry, with a hamper of lunch,—and set out, climbing leisurely along the trail, passing trees of ten and twelve feet diameter constantly, sugar-pines straight and cylindrical, reaching from two hundred and fifty to three hundred feet into the air, with room under their lowest branches for the monarchs of Eastern woodlands.

Under the shade, bursting up at the edge of the snow that still remained, we saw for the first time the snow-flower, a gorgeous bloom very delicate in detail. A plant like an asparagus head, but much larger, an inch and a half or two inches in diameter, pushes up through the soil without a leaf, and when about six inches high, opens a soft crimson mass of flowers, in character resembling a hyacinth, with encircling ribbons of scarlet and black. It is of extreme beauty, and one can but regret that it is difficult, if not quite impossible,



to have them show their glories where more lovers of flowers can enjoy them.

Our pointer started a deer from his midday rest to bound before us, and beyond doubt, many of the animals of the Sierra were at home among the ravines we followed. We brought no guide, escaping the annoyance of visiting wonderful things "personally conducted," but found our way along the trail that evidently was not often followed at that time.

We came unexpectedly upon the cinnamon-colored sequoias,—marked trees from their peculiar bark and its tint, and extremely beautiful in outline and character. So perfectly are they proportioned that the first impression is rather one of great beauty than size. Indeed it took time, study and comparison to realize the immensity of the stems towering so lightly in the air. Two were quite near us, standing on the opposite bank of the stream. This bank was fifteen or twenty feet high, but the vast roots extended from top to bottom, grasping it as if it was a hillock, with massive interlacing roots that alone could uphold the towering trees that held their heads on high as if defying time and storms forever. These trees were about fifteen feet in clear

diameter, not large members of the giant family, but among the most perfect, tempting us to long study before passing on to others. One of the same size, or larger, was prone upon the earth, giving a greater impression of magnitude than those that were standing.

Our rambles eventually brought us to the famous "Grizzly Giant," the patriarch: thirty-four feet in diameter, carrying immense size with slight diminution to the limbs which were well toward the top. These wonders of the arborical world do not disappoint the most exalted anticipations of their grandeur; they are so truly vast that long study of their towering forms enhances the delight they inspire, and one leaves them with sincere regret.

Onward, Yosemite-ward: the road is through glorious woodland with wild mountain scenery of constantly increasing boldness before the eye. Each succeeding summit gives more definite suggestion of the wonderful beauties of the valley, so that one reaches Inspiration Point by steps admirably calculated to lead up to the highest enjoyment of this first look into the great chasm. It is a view that perhaps has no equal; it is so harmonious in altitude and extent, so surprising

in combination, that for a time it pours sensations upon the eye that the mind fails to comprehend. The vision has to learn new lessons. To regard what looks like fine moss under shadowy cliffs as huge forests under cloven mountain precipices,—to see in a silver thread the winding Merced River, —to recognize a wisp of white mist as a rushing fall of fabulous altitude, and a field of seemingly tiny features, as a valley seven miles long!

We were not hurried on as stage tourists usually were, but were free to take ample time to study this comprehensive outlook of the varied wonders we were later to enjoy in detail, until they should become familiar features, ever more beautiful as they became better known.

Leaving our men and horses to follow, we walked down the mountain-side with new glimpses of the most exquisite character opening at every step, forgetful of time, lingering until night was upon us, when we reached the torrent of the Bridal Veil Fall, which was so swollen by water from the snow-fields far above us, that it was unsafe to try the ford, a very rocky one with a current of high velocity. We were some miles from any building, out of food for our horses and short of many necessities; but there was no get-

ting on, so we turned from the road to a thicket near the foot of the Bridal Veil Fall, where we soon had a snug camp-fire and fragrant balsam couches.

Lying before the camp-fire we looked up at the great fall, which, in the night, seemed to come from the zenith: swaying, rushing, thundering, as white as snow, indeed almost luminous. From cliffs nine hundred feet above us it sprang, and came without a ledge to check its fall.

At times the torrent poured directly down, fleecy and quiet; then with a cannon-like boom it would sway far away to be wafted back again, so closely that the spray fell upon us and the tree glistened with the mist-drops in the fire-light. It was a weird, ghost-like presence, one we watched for hours, until the moon shone over the towering cliffs to dispel some of the mystery of the swaying form, while revealing still new beauties. As the frost of the night locked up the water of the snow-buried mountain tops, the power of the stream was slightly checked; but all night long the ground trembled and the boom of the torrent prevented us from forgetting, even in sleep, the white-robed Spirit of the Sierra.

CHAPTER XVIII.

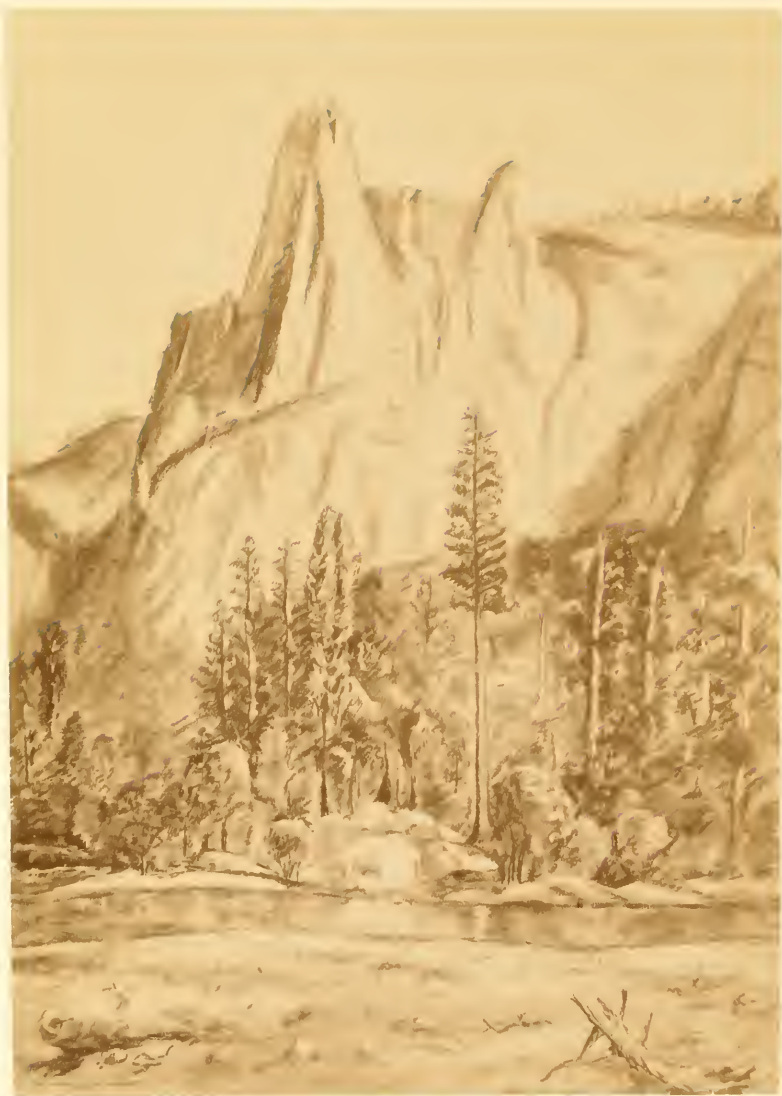
THE great cataract was not the creation of a dream, but on our early awakening was coming as white and beautiful as ever from the blue sky. The volume of water was lessened by the cold in the mountains, so we hastened our packing to make an early crossing of the ford that had baffled us the night before. As our last things were being stored, a large open coach drawn by six horses dashed through the river, and up the road on a gallop, bearing a gay party of tourists who waved salutation and cheered us as they spun along.

They were going out, and in a few days the individuals of the merry *partie des voyageurs* would be scattered far and wide, — to Australia,

China, Oregon or the East, recounting in various tongues the beauties of the Yosemite Valley.

The ford was a deep one filled with boulders, the powerful current was rolling on all the time, the water was up to the box of the wagon; but the ladies were on the high driver's-seat, and our perishables piled up on the rear seat out of danger, with the cook precariously balanced on the summit of the collection. The writer prospected the ford on horseback, and all passed through safely, finding an excellent road winding between the Merced River and the south walls of the mountains. Sunrise is practically a midday event: so tall are the lofty walls that encircle the valley; and we drove merrily along under the shadows of the towering cliffs with gorgeous views opening momentarily before us, seeking a spot for a permanent camp, embarrassed only in selection by the myriad of charming situations that offered rival attractions.

Our choice fell upon a sloping plain under the shadow of the Sentinel Rock, an obelisk shaft that pierced the sky three thousand feet above us. A small stream rustling from the craggy summit dissipated into spray by falling from rock to rock, came rushing by our tent, brilliant, pure



and cold, while a few scattered pines afforded shade for the few hours of midday during which the sun peered over the royal summits that shut in the sky to a narrow limit.

From our well chosen encampment, six waterfalls were in sight, including the great Yosemite Fall. Indeed it was hardly necessary to move to see many of the most exquisite features of this unequalled spot; so we spread out our blankets and cushions, and rested hour after hour, realizing the vastness and wonderful characteristics of the varied scene. The Yosemite Fall, two thousand six hundred feet high, was opposite to us, brilliant in full sunlight, — a wonderful feature. The sound of the rushing waters filled the whole valley, and every few moments booming explosions came from the torrents, echoing like peals of artillery over the continuous roar of the cataract. These loud reports strike the ear when the streams are full, day and night. They are attributed to various causes, such as great rocks falling over, or more probably to the sudden release of compressed air which finds vent when the torrent sways rapidly away to one side or the other, as it does constantly. We have noticed the same waving aside, like a curtain

blown by the wind, at the Staubach Fall in Switzerland and the same detonations, but in a less degree, as might be expected when the falls are compared: the Swiss fall being but six hundred feet high, or less than one quarter the altitude of the famous Sierra cataract.

The fall of stones at the time of high-water renders it unsafe to approach the foot of either fall without great caution, as we found after having been exposed to danger from fragments of rock that came with meteoric force, to be shattered on the cliffs about us as we stood near the Yosemite. When our gaze turned from the Yosemite Cascade, the great granite precipice of El Capitan was a feature that was of endless interest. From the lofty summit of this brilliant crag a small rivulet leaped into the air, — falling, falling, becoming first spray and then white foam, then from its velocity a thin almost invisible mist, to sway with the varying wind which at times caught the impalpable stream and carried it cloud-like over the mountain. Often the stream was so dissipated that it could be traced only by the shadow it cast on the white rock, before which it was wafted like the spirit of a cascade. Amid all these beautiful things

our situation was a most fortunate one, quite remote from hotels, leaving us free to study the gigantic features without any distracting companionship, or intruding suggestions from guides or peddlers.

Ordinary tourists were hampered by more or less annoying restrictions as to guides, saddle-horses and routes; they were often hurried to keep up with the impatient souls who never linger to enjoy impressions, and nearly always were accompanied by a gushing element more or less pronounced, ready to essay putting the wonders — so full of inspiring suggestion — into superlatives of especial unfitness.

All these vexations we escaped; indeed our tent was ordinarily as secluded as if we were the discoverers of the valley. Beside a daily stage, there was little passing our retreat to remind us of companionship other than that of the stupendous works of nature.

All tended to the perfection of gypsy life, especially as we did not permit the tempting points about us to so hasten our inspection of them as to expose our minds too rapidly to the intense impressions they must make on any one who is sensitive to the beauties and wonders of

nature. There is probably no accessible spot where vast and magnificent combinations of mountain and valley are so interwoven with the beauties of calm and falling water, forest, cliff and dome as in the valley we were camping in ; and quietly as we lived among the wonders, we could but be at times bewildered and overwhelmed with all that excited awe, wonder and admiration, nor did the deep impress of our surroundings lessen as day by day we became familiar with them.

CHAPTER XIX.

Our breakfast, served in the open air under a low-spreading pine, was a very different event from the commonplace beginning of the day within the confines of civilization.

Sleep in tents leaves the gypsy Rambler with a fresh, wide-awake vigor that seldom favors one when aroused from the soft beds, curtained chambers and artificial heat of even the most perfectly ventilated houses; it has a restoring influence that has not only "knitted up the unravelled sleeves of care," not only made good the waste and weariness of a day forever gone, but one that gilds the glad possession of another morning with keen appreciation, high hope and physical enjoyment.

About us, around our gypsy home, our horses were tethered, watching our movements with an intelligence that comes only from nomadic companionship. Billy Gray, if loosed, would take his feed-box in his mouth and bring it right side up like a contribution-box, soliciting an extra treat of grain; and if refused he would commence a career of mischief that only ended when he was ignominiously led to his tether-pin, after having burned his nose on the stove-pipe and upset many things, the cook's temper included.

At the time of our lingering in the valley the sun's increasing power was unlocking the streams, opening the buds, painting the flowers, giving rainbow color to the spray from the lofty cataraacts, and awakening the animal and vegetable life that, tented under billows of snow, had slept away a long winter. All was fresh, fragrant and vigorous. Life, motion and power pulsed in sky, water and sod, filling our ears with the roar of the cascades, our eyes with myriad beauties, our lungs with the spring-breath of the woodland laden with the perfumes of bursting bud and opening flower, and our hearts with gratitude at being permitted thus — an undisturbed little family circle in a tented home — to

give ourselves to enjoying scenes that are unequalled.

It is difficult to realize how much of the impress of the valley must be lost to those who are within hotels — all bustle and confusion from arriving and departing tourists; to the parties who bargain for strange horses, follow different guides, invade such sanctuaries as the Mirror Lake in company with half a hundred sharp-voiced “personally conducted” wanderers, and are hastened here and there to see wonders that must forever float in their minds as mixed phantoms of confused succession.

Our days were half idle, given to gazing at the cataracts, the cliffs and domes, watching from couches of fragrant balsam the shadows come and go, and letting the delicious influences of the magnificence about us make their slow impress until they became so deep and lasting that through the memories of many a later wandering the scenes of the Yosemite come as fresh and shapely to mind as the development of a well-exposed photographic plate.

Occasionally, as a mild form of industry, we took trout from the clear pools of the Merced River, — a welcome addition to our bill of fare,

but a less delicate fish by far than their speckled cousins of the Eastern States.

Our horses proved sure-footed and more powerful than the ponies that are secured for climbing the trails to the high points of interest. The trails are very crooked, narrow and generally uncertain, often passing points where a stumbling horse might throw a rider a thousand feet over ragged rocks. At first it is dizzy climbing, causing as much fear as pleasure to nervous persons; but the wonderful scenes soon overcome all timidity, and equestrians learn to leave their horses to pick their own way, which they do with great caution.

Our first ascent was to Glacier Point, — an excursion giving a most comprehensive series of views, including the especially noted points of the high Sierras, fine down-looks into the valley, and an extensive survey of the famous domes and great peaks of the ragged ranges that bewilder the eye with the vast perspectives of rock and snow that make a superb sky-line to the far east.

Union Point first affords a resting-place two thousand three hundred feet above the valley. This rocky plateau commands a bird's-eye view

of the valley, including the Yosemite Fall, Mirror Lake and a hundred great features, and richly rewards the toil of the ascent should no wonders be found beyond; but when after a rest the tourist passes on to Sentinel Dome and Glacier Point, new views unfold themselves that are not included in the sweep of the valley itself.

Directly in front of Glacier Point, beyond a deep precipitous chasm, the magnificent cataracts of the Vernal and Nevada falls are superb features: one above the other in a wild ravine, through which the snow-fed river pours from the high Sierra, falling two thousand feet in two miles, leaping at the Vernal Fall four hundred feet, and at the Nevada six hundred feet in cascades of driven foam. All the setting of these cataracts is worthy of them: towering granite domes, riven peaks, deep gorges with dark foliage in such spots as earth is found to support trees, and over all the grand Sierra summits, white with mantles of snow that accent their picturesque forms against the deep blue sky of Nevada. Part of the way to these points we went on horseback through cuttings in snow so deep that we could not reach the tops of the drifts with our whips while in the saddle. Men

were extending these tunnel-like cuttings, but we were compelled to leave our steeds and go on foot over fields of hard snow that were of unknown depths, where a slip might send one over ledges that crown dizzy heights.

Our days were full of varied pleasure; each night developed new beauties as the moonlight fell on the snow-white cascades that with their constant roar were ever present, filling even our sleep with consciousness of their ceaseless power.

No one pen can describe the mysterious valley so long hidden in the Sierra fastnesses; the geologist, the botanist, artist, poets, scientists, and gypsies, — all may give pages filled with attempts to tell the story of the valley, and abandon the vain task, leaving more untold. The wildest fancy can scarcely suggest a fantastic feature that does not exist, and it is indeed one place where the longing for wild and infinite beauty is fully satisfied.

CHAPTER XX.

MATERIAL considerations break rudely into the most romantic moments. Our days were full of delight, but our hours for vagabonding were drawing to an end. Hay (barley straw) was seventy dollars a ton and hard to get. Our horses missed the nutritious alfalfa of more fertile lands, and showed that they would not long endure the privation of valley rations combined with mountain climbing; so with deep regret we folded our tents to go, after many days of delicious lingering, once more to strange scenes. Our route led us, by the bold front of El Capitan, through an avalanche of ice and snow that had just come over the Fall of the Virgin's Tears (rather abundant and muddy tears they

were) and on over the mountain ranges north of the Merced River, which was roaring savagely far below us. The varying views before us were very grand, but tame in comparison with those



COMING OUT OF THE VALLEY.

we were leaving ; and we all felt, in looking back to the last glimpse of the Half Dome and Mount Starr King, that the vivid enjoyments we had so fully realized would long be more actual in memory than any new ones we could anticipate.

Our outward route was by the then newly

completed Coulterville Road, a well-engineered and perfectly made toll-road. Soon after leaving the valley we passed the deep ford of the Cascades in sight of the falls, which are very handsome, so grand that they would be a marked feature in any spot less full of greater attractions.

For some miles the road is high on the north side of the Cañon of the Merced, which, raging with the flood of spring, fills the air with its ceaseless roar. When at last it disappeared from view among crags and forest, we were for the first moment since entering the valley in a quiet woodland, where the stillness was a novelty, — we having been so long amid the perpetual boom and rush of falling waters that our ears had become accustomed to it.

From the high passes north of the Merced there were six thousand feet of descent in our favor as we drove westward; and over the good road we went famously, except when we halted to gather our last souvenirs of the great forest, — huge cones, branches covered with golden moss, sequoia-bark from trees shattered by lightning, and flowers; of the latter we had found two hundred and thirty different kinds (all wild),

many peculiar to California, among them abundant specimens of rare beauty.

At midday we passed the Merced Grove of Sequoia Gigantea, a fine collection of the giant trees, containing many of handsome form, but none equal in size to those of the Mariposa Grove. There were however among them specimens of twenty feet clear diameter, larger by far than any trees found away from the Sierra slopes.

Ferguson's rapid driving was admirable, — making us feel safe when swinging around curves so short the leaders were sometimes half out of sight, with precipices yawning far below the narrow ledges we were upon.

Thirty-four miles we passed, amid lovely scenes, camping at Bower Cave, where deep among the rocks a subterraneous pool afforded interest for several hours' inspection.

On again — through low half-barren foot-hills, passing hydraulic mining-fields — to La Grange, our last camp, on ground so hard that an iron tent-pin could not be driven. So great was the fear on the part of the farmers of fire reaching the vast grain-fields, that we could only get permission to set our stove by placing it on the

gravel in the bend of a stream where it was watched with anxious eyes.

It was the twenty-second of May, but a sharp shower fell; the day before there was snow on the foot-hills, — an unusual event for the season.

Our gypsy days were ending: this was to be the last day of our drive of seven hundred miles amid all varieties of scene and all classes of people; so we abandoned, not without regret, our camping traps, our stove utensils, and the many contrivances that had secured us luxuries and comforts no matter how remote our camp or forbidden our surroundings.

With little to pack and a light wagon we were early on the road, — one of very slender interest, — passing through grain-fields, with here and there a house on posts, having little look of a home, shadeless and entirely unattractive. At lunch we halted at one of these houses, where kind permission was accorded our cook to use the family stove in preparing our lunch. Awaiting it with keen appetites, for an hour we had a novel experience of climate.

The sun was high and powerful, the air so clear that there was very little refraction, shadows were dark and sharp-edged, while the cool

wind from the Pacific blew a steady blast. We were too hot in the sun: so we sought the only shelter available, which was the unromantic north side of a barn, where in three minutes we were chilled; we went back to get warm on the sunny side and were soon sun-scorched; again we fled to the shade, only to be driven back into the burning heat, and so it was with the ludicrous result that we marched in procession around the barn, chilled, burned and chilled again, until we could lunch and drive on.

The twin peaks of Mt. Diavolo were the only picturesque features before us during the afternoon, and our most novel sensations were driving into Stockton to be once more amid a crowd on a paved street.

Here we took a train for San Francisco, leaving our outfit to come on the steamboat. Early the next morning our cavalcade clattered into the spacious court of the Palace Hotel, where sleepy servants gazed with surprise at the unusual spectacle the gypsy outfit presented in that aristocratic precinct, while the porters sent our multifarious traps to our apartments.

Ferguson deftly swung the four horses out of the court, the cook followed on Billy Grey to a

sales-stable where our pets were sold to go to safe homes, and our gypsying was ended: our little party of three — nut-brown, happy and hardy, thanks to the air of the sea, the exercise of the coast range, the sunshine of the valleys and the breath of the pines on the Sierra slopes!

CHAPTER XXI.

GYPSY DAYS IN FLORIDA.

FLEEING from the cold of the north in January, we found ourselves steaming rapidly away from one of the long wharves of the lower St. John on a small impetuous little yacht, one of the busy, bustling kind, imbued with the restless spirit that small things usually possess and freely exhibit, to show that after all size is not everything.

It was a day for idling,— the rapid steam-puff was not in harmony with our inclinations : so, leaning over the small bow deck that just held a bell and two easy-chairs, the order was given to old Paul, the well-known pilot, to slow up, and Paul conveyed the same to the engineer, when the sharp ripple at the bow lost its rustle, the engine

breathed more comfortably, and with a wide, lazy wake spreading far behind on the golden river, we lay back in our chairs and determined to abandon northern haste and learn laziness in earnest, in fact to do nothing as diligently as possible. Indeed, the lesson was very easy. The slow-drifting clouds, the currentless river, the gentle wind, and all our surroundings were peaceful and free from suggestion of haste, and coming as we had from driven clouds and hurrying storms, it was enough to revel in sunshine and repose, leaving for another time action and progress.

The afternoon found us at Palatka, where the larder was reinforced, ice purchased and a skiff obtained. At twilight we pushed on, turning into the narrower and more picturesque channels, where the forest crowded out to the water's edge and sprays of flowering vines hung far over the flood, lost in vain admiration of their mirrored beauty and grace.

The water was deep even to the shore, enabling us to cut the bends of the stream close under the foliage that rustled with the breeze made by our motion, while views of remarkable beauty opened every moment before us, each in deeper shade and more mysterious beauty as the rapid darkness

came on. As later every form on shore was lost in the dense blackness of night, it became a source of wonder to us how old Paul, our colored pilot, could thread the devious and narrow channel; but on we sped, only halting inshore once to let one of the great river-boats go by. The huge thing came panting like a leviathan breathing flame, with wide-open furnaces casting broad bands of light over the water, and rows of colored signal-lamps far above the bright cabin windows; she made a striking scene against the night as she sped on, bearing a gay throng of pleasure-seekers to the upper river.

We were not anxious, however, to get on. There was a wealth of beauty, by the way, that few on the great steamer would see, and after feeling our way for a time, old Paul rang to "Stop her!" "Back her!" and our little boat drifted against a wood-wharf, that no one but our pilot could have found, with no sign to mark it under the forest blackness, and here tied up to a decayed dock; we did not envy the passengers going "on time."

Former experience told how there would be a rush for seats and a scramble for food, and a long cue of tired men and women waiting to learn

from a patient purser that there were no more staterooms, no more beds on the floor, and no more blankets for a curl-up under the dining-tables. We were not at the mercy of negro stewardesses, nor to be snubbed by magnificent waiters; we were as independent as chimney-sweeps in a crowd. Your correspondent was admiral of the fleet (steamer and two skiffs), sailing-master, "bo'sun light and midshipmite," and chief of ordinance (one Scott and one Remington), while Madame was in command of our cabin passengers (maid and one child), where she reigned supreme over a culinary department consisting of two spirit-lamps at night and a fire on shore in the daytime.

Just at the time we tied up, hot tea was singing on one lamp, hot soup (thanks to Liebig) on the other, and with rolls, devilled meats and canned luxuries there was a good supper laid away, and the events of the day came in pleasant retrospect through the cheering medium of sparkling wine.

At dawn we clambered upon the old wharf. A wood road ran back from it through the forest to a settler's home. Birds were singing gaily, among them our familiar summer friends; but many strange notes came from the low growth.

Following what seemed to be the sound of an axe, a woodpecker was found, an earlier and more industrious workman than the lazy crackers. It was one of the large fellows that are sometimes seen on southern trees : as large as a teal-duck, a gay handsome bird, with a bill like iron, and a head that enables him to achieve the feat long considered impossible, — of sawing wood with a hammer. Ducks, herons, water-turkeys, ospreys, and other birds followed the narrow water in their flight, shying above the tree tops as they found us occupying their solitude, and saying hard things of us in their own way, while high up on a venerable cypress limb sat several ducks, rather an unusual sight, and there they sat while we made a fire and cooked our breakfast, and only moved off when a ball went very near them.

Nothing can equal this mode of enjoying the Southern rivers. From the lofty decks of the steamers a great deal is seen ; but every moment one is hurried ruthlessly away from some spot where there is every temptation to linger, and then left to while away hours at some landing where preceding crowds have gathered every flower and alarmed every bird with pistols and parasols.

After a leisurely breakfast on shore, as free from care as gypsies are, we went on board, put easy-chairs on deck, laid our guns before us, and steamed on through scenes of great beauty and variety, now and then getting a duck which was picked up and enjoyed by our men, who cooked them in the furnace under the boiler.

About noon we reached Lake George and found it very rough ; but leaving the channel we followed an unusual route through the islands and ventured out, our yacht rolling a good deal, but we soon came under the west shore and found shelter. About midway on the shore is one of the wonderful springs that are so beautiful in Florida. Leaving the yacht, we poled in a flat skiff over a shallow bar, and up the stream that flows from the spring. It passes through water-lilies that were swarming with duck and rail, while in the water that was as clear as air were shoals of fish : bass, mullet, long savage-looking garfish and huge catfish. They would not bite any bait we offered, but were easily punched with an oar, and with a spear numbers could have been obtained. Half a mile from the lake the stream ended in a curve under a high bank, and here by hard rowing we found the spring, and

looked down into a white walled chasm through water that seemed too ethereal to support our skiff. It was a dizzy downlook into this deep pool, where long weeds writhed and swayed forty or fifty feet below us in the swell of the current, and where shoals of huge fish would swim out from under rocks and be swept rapidly about like shadows. The water rose with such force as to make a high boiling centre, where skilful rowing could poise a boat, only to slide away with a rapid balloon-like motion that was not quite pleasant. Fine palmettos had surrounded this wonderful pool with a fit and beautiful shade; but they were just then a heap of smouldering ashes, having been cut away for cotton ground that might better have been taken from the unlimited forest beyond the small clearing. Vandal hands have rarely marred a more weird scene, nor ignorance more surely damaged the value of a rare possession; but so it is in Florida. All hands — from the jewelled one that wrote a lady's name in a font at St. Augustine, to the cracker's horny palm — are against the ancient, the curious and the beautiful, and ere long the shore may bear quack-medicine names, and old walls fall before want of taste and give way to pine-

fences as has the old and mysterious "Treasury wall" at St. Augustine.

Full of regret at the useless sacrifice of these trees, we let our boat drift down the stream, starting again the water-fowl and the fish. A pale-faced cracker-boy came alongside in a dug-out and tried to sell a wild turkey for a price that fell very rapidly; but we left it with him, as hardly to be cooked over a spirit-lamp or to be safely done by the fireman under the boiler.

Steaming on we found the mouth of the Upper St. John, now a narrow river, flowing with some current through dense forest, where new forms of vegetable life abound and seem to strive to cover the river with plants that float in miniature islands with the stream, and vines that reach out like carpets of green from the leaf-laden shores.

Animal life did not abound here as it did a few years before, but was more abundant by far than now. Every man and boy on a steam-boat does "Shooting in Florida" with some arm: pistol, champagne-corks, orange-pips or rifles; and no bird, from the sparrow to the carrion buzzard, is safe, except in the abundance of bad shooting. All are wild and flit on just out of range, and even the stupid alligator slips from

his mud bank when the steamers come laboring against the stream.

The tropical character of this noble river is chiefly seen above Lake George. North of this lake the northwest gales—the cold storm winds of the country—pass only overland from the frozen north, and in mid-winter sometimes bring a very unpleasant chill,—one that renders orange-culture precarious, blighting in some years the new buds; but south of this, the winds having any westerly direction pass over more or less of the Gulf, and are disarmed by the warmth and moisture of that body of water of their blighting chill and dryness, until about Enterprise cold and frost are practically unknown: palms, palmettos, bananas and orange-trees assume forms of vigor that render them very beautiful to the Northern eye, and the refugee from winter finds an assured promise of gentle air and golden sunshine.

The river is very crooked, bending sharply around points, cutting deeply into the banks, forming deep boiling pools, where fish are seen breaking constantly. The shores are usually low; a point ten feet high is known as a bluff, and such are sought by settlers for homes, possessing all the freedom from miasma, insects, and

dampness that can be expected where the sun of almost perpetual summer breeds during many months a full crop of annoyances. The driest and most desirable places are found upon the shell-mounds, where one strata upon another of shells forms elevations of very considerable extent. These shell-formations are of great interest and puzzle the keenest minds with their layers of different shells, each distinctly defined in character and differing in a marked form from the next.

The water-worn river-banks show long and perfect sections of this character, and the strata are plainly seen in even and distinctly marked lines, not always level, but extending in long, unbroken elevations and depressions, — showing that some disturbing upheavals have raised and lowered the deposited shells after they were imbedded in their present order.

Some of the strata, lying perhaps six inches in thickness, are composed of bivalve shells almost exclusively, much crushed and broken, but cemented quite firmly. Other strata are without shells of this form, being composed of conical, convolute shells of about one inch on each angular side ; but these differ again : in some the

shells are fresh, but little broken, and not firmly cemented, — in others, crushed in fine fragments, and strongly united with the lime made by their partial decomposition, they form the Coquina Rock. All these varieties may be seen overlying one another in a vertical height of four or five feet, and the different bands of color form lines that are visible as far as the face of the formation is exposed.

Upon these shell-banks there are found numerous conical mounds, regular in form, rising from ten to thirty feet, evidently of human origin, supposed to have been, like the pyramids of Egypt, burial-places for the distinguished dead of some race that has left no other record. The arrow-heads, axes and other works of rude art found in these mounds are those of the stone age, which on this continent is extended to the present time among remote Indian tribes; but some of these implements are found imbedded in a conglomerate so firm and stone-like that they convey to the mind of the ethnologist an impression of as remote antiquity as is attributed to the bone-cave and gravel-deposits of France.

A great deal of learning has been exhausted upon these remains; but full examination has not

yet been made, and many links in the chain of unwritten history may be supplied when a full comparison of these mounds and the works they contain is made with the corresponding discoveries of the Old World.

As the more minute peculiarities of our pre-historic ancestors are learned, there is no safe limit to assume of the unravellings of the maze that surrounds the deeply interesting questions of unity or diversity of races; and it is not unlikely that secrets are hidden in the shell-mounds of Florida that may, when discovered and interpreted in the broad light of future knowledge, tell many a curious tale of wandering tribes and far-fetched arts and customs.

Half lost in vain theories and surmises aroused by these peculiar remains, gun and rod were not unfrequently laid aside, and our minds given up to the romantic associations of the first voyagers who here sought the fountain of youth, carrying so much of woe and cruelty with them that it is fortunate for the present that they found no elixir of the kind; and to the more vague but pleasant fancies of the race that still earlier possessed this alluring land and roamed freely, with no more idea of a coming and overcoming

race than occurs to us now in our period of supremacy.

But this is drifting, and we would not be left without anchorage in the realms of speculation. We really went rapidly against the stream, and after a long day of full enjoyment tied our craft to a bank, and in our small but snug cabin made pleasant plans for the morrow.

CHAPTER XXII.

GYPSY DAYS IN FLORIDA.

Our third day on the little steamer found us among the prairies that lie on either side of the river below Lake Munroe. They were low plains with groups of trees like islands, and long rows of stately palmettos defining the curves and retracings of the idle river, reminding us of eastern scenes of desert and palms. Herds of half-wild cattle were seen upon them, and sometimes a wild turkey would seek cover, not by flight, but by running like the wind. A little back from the river, on wet places out of rifle range, were groups of white herons, the most stately and beautiful of birds, and great flocks of large curlew, while now and then gannets would spread

their huge black and white wings, and seek quiet further from the river. No bird is so showy and conspicuous as the gannet, and it was long our ambition to get one as a specimen ; but they were very wary, and only settled down in wet places remote from any cover of trees or brush. Fortune, however, at last did better for us than patience and perseverance (pardon any imputation in favor of the fickle goddess); for while rowing in a skiff, a flock alarmed by a steamer came laboring over the river, urging their way with powerful pinions against a gale of wind. They saw us, and tried to steer clear by turning their course several points into the wind ; but they made too much leeway to save their distance, and one fellow came down before my gun and sent up a cloud of spray from the river in his fall.

“Get ’um quick!” exclaimed old July, my faithful boatman, “or an alligator may carry him down ;” and “get ’um quick” we did, bringing in as magnificent a mass of green, black and white plumage as nature ever adorned a bird with, arousing some speculations as to what a great economy would result, and what a vast amount of envious and toilsome strife and ambition would be saved, had poor bare humanity been as com-

fortably and superbly clothed, without the toil of the needle or the costly fabrics of fashion. These reflections did not interest July, who at once explained his "get 'um quick" counsel as inspired by an experience that had impressed him very deeply. A gentleman hunting from Enterprise shot a duck which fell in the water. As he was about taking it in, a large 'gator appropriated the bird. The gentlemen in turn gave the beast a peppering of shot for his sauce, enraging him without any serious injury, when he turned on the boat and took out a piece of the side, gunwale and all, so damaging it that they only made their way home in it by careening the broken side high out of water. These ill-mannered fellows often deprive the hunter of game that falls in the water, and the foregoing incident teaches the imprudence of irritating them with shot.

The fishing about the outlet of Lake Munroe is very good, but gar- and cat-fish play the mischief with trolling gear and carry away spoons most annoyingly. Bass are the best fish obtained, here known as trout by those who cannot even imagine the brilliant rapid mountain streams wherein the Northern beauties seize our dainty flies.

In one of the eddying pools we took bass so rapidly that in less than half an hour the bottom of the skiff was alive with them. To avoid waste they were given to the steward of a steamboat, and abundantly supplied the table for a hungry crowd of tourists.

In the spring-time the herons assume, to adorn their season of love-making, a plumage of remarkable beauty. It commences at the base of the neck, and extending backward between and over the wings, the long airy plumes of dainty feather sprays hang down gracefully behind the bird, and give a very stylish addition, à la "pannier," to a bird that never saw a fashion-plate and has no trouble with a laundress.

To obtain these exquisite decorations for the race so sadly neglected by nature with regard to the adornments lavished on the so-called inferior creations, these "angel birds" are assiduously hunted, and are consequently so wild that only by strategy can they be shot on any of the borders of the river.

From our deck I noticed that numbers of blue, white and lesser herons alighted very constantly upon two isolated trees standing at the end of a shallow water-way that extended from the river

into the prairie; so, with the hope of gaining some shots, we ordered a halt. The steamer was tied to a tree, and we launched a skiff and paddled through the water-lilies or "bonnets" (as the huge leaves are called), starting flocks of duck, rail and birds, and disturbing the siestas of numerous alligators and turtles. The only shelter was under some small water-growing bushes, where I hid myself as well as I could, draping my hat with Spanish moss, and disposing it about, for concealment; the skiff was sent away to await recall later.

After a time all the turmoil I had caused ceased. The ducks came one by one and dodged about under the reeds and lily-leaves, while inquisitive blackbirds flitted near with impertinent airs and chaffed all my ideas of concealment with unbounded slang. An alligator that had been out sunning himself where our boat lay, came up without a ripple and eyed me with idle curiosity as an interloper, until he drifted almost against the shore; but we were after herons, and would shoot them only after the manner of the Western man, who, "when he went a cattin' went a cattin'," and would not accept a bass or pike in lieu of the wide-mouthed bull-head. Animal life

was abundant all about, with little evidence of fear; and watching it, it was easy to realize how deeply engrossed such naturalists as Audubon became in thus studying birds and animals when free in their own haunts.

Nothing seemed aware of me but the herons. They came from remote points and seemed about to perch on the old trees, where so many had been seen, but swept by and went on to other retreats. It was hardly possible for them to discover me, and I could not divine any cause for their wary movements unless they were warned by the angry scoldings of the blackbirds that hovered about with incessant sharp cries. A shot or two reduced these alarmists to comparative silence, when a blue heron sailed up, poised for a moment on a bare limb, and then fell lifeless into the pool below.

Hoping for other shots, I did not gather it in; but it was not long before an alligator slowly swam towards the dead bird, and would probably have carried it away but for the opportune arrival of an explosive ball in his head. He churned the water for a moment like a propeller wheel, and then sought the bottom to die among the weeds, when again all was quiet. But I

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waited in vain: herons sailed about over the marshes, but none came near, until weary of watching I summoned the boat and poled back to the yacht, glad to get out of the miasmatic marsh.

Our plan was to go above Lake Munroe, but the water was too low on the bar, and our boat could not get over. We visited Mellonville, where shad were being taken in enormous quantities; and then anchored abreast the site of the old Enterprise Hotel, and landed, to visit once more, after several years' absence, the Blue Spring, than which none can be more beautiful. It has been often described; but it is not easy to convey an idea of the deep opaline tint of the water, nor of the picturesque effect of the round pool, and its overhanging shade of live oak, palmettos and vines. It is about eighty feet in diameter and very deep. There is no motion in the blue water; but a very large stream flows away from it, showing the volume of the spring. The water leaves traces of white sulphur along the brook, which falls some twenty or thirty feet to the lake, affording a perfect place for running water and shower-baths. We remained over night at the Mellonville wharf, and visited some gardens con-

ducted by people of taste and skill, and saw many evidences of the capacity of this soil and climate to produce almost every luxury. Potatoes were grown in February for the table, oranges and bananas flourished free from danger of frost, and beautiful flowers rewarded very little care with profuse bloom. The geranium was a small tree in the open air, and the oleanders made shade for a party.

Strawberries were ripe while ours were under deep snow, and it was not easy to put faith in the idea that the cold March winds were heaping drifts that would for many a day resist the sun that fell with such force upon us.

Wide shallow reaches of water extended into currentless bays, very shallow and warmed by the sun, all swarming with aquatic life that was distinctly seen over the bright sandy bottom. Standing on the bow of a skiff with old July, a good boatman, pushing it quietly along, it was like gliding through a well-filled aquarium. Garfish, with their long vicious noses, hardly cared to move, mullet in schools drifted about with little sign of alarm, moccasins and water-snakes swam under the boat glaring fiercely at it and darting out their crimson tongues in a threatening manner as

if they were quite ready to pick a quarrel with anything invading their haunts, — while stinging rays and electric eels were so abundant that it was evident that anyone so unfortunate as to fall in the water would meet a very unpleasant and dangerous reception. At one time, however, the prospect of plunging in among all those venomous things was very imminent. We were poling about, — Madame, La Petite Enfant, and the writer, — with old July as usual giving us the benefit of his keen observations in wild-life, when I shot an alligator who was enjoying a day out for sun-bathing and intellectual repose. The ball scarred his head quite deeply, and he lay quietly down without the ordinary display of power and vitality that they usually give when even fatally shot. We wanted to make a study of him : so he was gathered in and his head pushed under the bow-seat, where he was soon forgotten amid new scenes of interest. We went on and on, the water under us swarming with biting, stinging, shocking things, armed with spines, electricity and poisonous fangs ; indeed, we were saying how bad it would be to get into trouble in such a spot, when the end seat of the boat flew into the air, and the alligator, which had been only stunned, was making himself vigor-

ously manifest. He was smashing things freely in his efforts to turn around, and finally succeeded, when he came for us with open mouth, his head and jaws streaming with blood and unlimited vengeance in his eye. It was an embarrassing moment. Jumping overboard was a last resort, shooting him involved shooting through him and the bottom of the boat ; there was really no time to arrange a scheme for the emergency. He came slowly along, opening a most ample and unpleasant exhibit of red mouth and strong teeth bent on immediate business, when July, who was crowded against us in the end of the skiff, got an oar into his jaws, and in a moment we had him in the water, when a second shot made him manageable.

We shot many after this, but never took any more into our skiffs when out as a family party, as they are very uncertain in dying, and when wounded are enormously strong and violent.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GYPSYING IN FLORIDA.

TURNING northward, we gave ourselves to the current and went rapidly on. At times we would tie the yacht to a tree, and leaving her and her crew, row quietly up some of the small and unfrequented streams that join the river. Here all was as wild as when the Indians pursued game with their stone arrow-heads and took fish with bone spears ; nature seemed to revel in her own power and beauty, and cast her glories of golden sunlight and varied foliage on every hand. The huge serried leaves of the palmettos swayed and glistened like shields hiding a woodland host. Cypress-trees held their light foliage high against the sky, and graceful vines hung in long curves

from them to the dense undergrowth of novel form. Creeping-plants held their bloom over the water on dead trunks, while air plants and ferns found resting-places on the old oaks, amid whose upper branches balls of mistletoe shone with their polished leaves. All this would be doubled in reflection, while the dividing line between the exquisite reality and the no less beautiful image below was so hidden by trailing vines and aquatic plants that the vistas of the narrow streams became dreamy and indistinct as they extended far away into an uncertainty of waving moss and deceptive shadows.

Stealing once quietly far into one of these deep, overhung bayous, with all the mysterious surroundings of festooned moss, tangled vines and luxurious growth, I passed into shade that was almost darkness. The boat drifted slowly and silently under the interlaced branches, hardly disturbing the mirror-like surface by a ripple. Now and then a moccasin snake would drop from the trees into the dark water; one clumsy wretch fell on the edge of the skiff, arousing our speculation as to whether he would stay in or wriggle out, until it was with unmingled satisfaction that we saw him slip into the bayou. Others of his

fellows would rest in a coil on the huge water-lily leaves and assume threatening attitudes as we glided past them. At length the secluded end of the water-way was reached with noiseless paddle, and there on the trunk of a half-fallen tree were the genii of this sombre retreat. Solemn, wise and immeasurably imposing spirits they were,—the familiars of hags and witches, the omen birds of thousands of years of superstition,—an assemblage of owls. They were numerous enough for a full jury, and it is beyond question that I was duly passed upon without a hearing. The verdict was not handed down; but it is probably known throughout the miasmatic precincts of this nameless estuary, that the only man who had ever imprudently invaded its dark recesses was condemned and ordered away forever, by the wisest bench of worthies that ever maintained the dignities of local law. We may commit worse crimes than stealing into one of nature's charmed circles, but we shall never face again so solemn and impressive a judicial bench.

Coming from the shadows of cypress and palm to the brilliant sunlight, we would go on, miles in advance of the yacht, drifting noiselessly with the stream, often stealing upon game, and fre-

quently getting a few fish. When tired, we could wait until overtaken, tie our skiff behind the steamer, and enter the snug cabin to find shelter, rest and all the comforts needful. No life could be more enjoyable. We were not confined to a limited district as when in camp, and yet there was the same freedom and the same opportunities for seeing and sharing wildwood pursuits. There was variety in every day, fresh scenes each hour, and new temptations and anticipations leading on and on, from one point to another,—all with little or no fatigue.

This simple method of steam-yachting must become one of the most popular of all indulgences. With our great lakes, connected by safe and navigable routes, and rivers of endless extent and unlimited variety, through which one may wander from the tropics to the far north, and find all climates and the fruits and game of each, there are unparalleled opportunities for this luxurious life. Whatever taste or fancy may impel one to wandering, in a yacht all the comforts and conveniences can be carried. The botanist can, at leisure and undisturbed, unfold his cases of plants; the artist can sketch, and not have to gather up the disorder of easel and studio; the geologist

may ballast his craft with stone, and the ethnologist gather relics and form a museum en route. For the naturalist and sportsman it is perfection. His rods need not be unjointed or his guns unlimbered. He can stuff his specimens, load shells and tie dainty flies by a window before which new and varied scenes are passing ; or after a hard day's tramping come back to abundant comforts.

Of course, there may be a good deal of expense connected with yachting ; but very complete launches and small yachts are now put afloat in perfect trim, for hardly any greater cost for purchase or maintenance than is represented by each of hundreds of fine carriages that are to be met with on the fashionable avenues of our great cities, and we are confident from personal experience, that — abandoning all ambition for the luxuries of cuisine and seeking only plain and needful arrangements — a small family or a few gentlemen may make summer or winter trips with no more cost than is incurred by many pleasure parties who find far less of comfort and independence than they would commanding their own yacht and their own movements. A man of as much skill as is required to make a successful sportsman can do a great deal in attending to

his boat, so that the cost and annoyance of having too many men may be avoided.

The trip described in these notes was made in a small yacht chartered by the day. She was about forty-eight feet long, and carried captain, pilot, engineer and fireman, yet the cost for a party of four was only about the same as the daily hotel board and passage tickets over the route; while the ability to visit many points without remaining until another boat should permit moving on, was a very great economy of time and money. Of course, much was seen and enjoyed that the tourist is usually hurried past, or only sees in company with a crowd that does away with all the romance and characteristic quiet of the wilderness.

The captain was a useless party and did no service. The pilot was needful. The fireman was a luxury, a mere attendant upon a lazy engineer; one man could easily feed the fire, and run the engine with less trouble than he could get out of the fireman's way, so that two men — one a competent and careful engineer, and the other a pilot well acquainted with the channels — could run a launch or small yacht with ease, and keep her under way as many hours per diem as would be desirable.

Not only are the rivers and lakes of Florida attractive cruising-grounds, but the inlets and estuaries of the Southern coasts offer great inducements for the invalid, the naturalist, the antiquarian and sportsman.

In the spring when the sun begins to fall with a fierce heat on the rivers, and despite all said to the contrary, does render too much exposure imprudent, the sea-coast is perfect. The finer kinds of fish are in season, and many beach and bay birds are to be obtained.

In April the sea-bathing is safe and pleasant, and invalids and well people will do a prudent thing to halt alongshore and delay their return until such birds as the bobolinks and orioles are with them, and not risk the loss of all the benefit of a long and costly trip, by coming on with the robins and bluebirds who are beguiled by a few warm days into shivering through many a long bleak storm.

Returning from this rambling disquisition upon drifting in one's own craft, we come back to our own for the time, and tie her to the wharf at Orange Bluff, above Lake George. Night has fallen, and we light a pitch-pine fire and cook thereon, while enjoying the picturesque effect of

the rich, mellow light that illumines our boat against the dark river, and brings out here and there a tree in bright relief. Some deer-hunters join us, light their pipes and take their nightcap from our flask. The stories of a real backwoodsman are always amusing and awaken the common interest of all the craft; so naturally it is late before we mature plans with our new friends for a hunt together, when they call their dogs and go to their cabin, and we turn in to dream of antlers and trophies.

CHAPTER XXIV.

GYPSYING IN FLORIDA.

WE awoke at our mooring at Orange Bluff and found a fair bright morning. As soon as the sun was well up, our cronies of the evening before came with their guns on their shoulders, followed by half-bred hounds. The steam was impatiently escaping, so no time was lost. Our skiffs were tied astern, and off we went against the dark tide of the river to a point some miles above, where we sidled up to a steep bank and tied the yacht to a tree.

Here under a superb oak, with wild-orange trees all about, we made a camp for the ladies, and then took skiffs for a stretch up a shallow inlet. We landed at last in a tangle of orange-trees,

palmettos, vines and cypress,— all forming a beautiful mass of foliage, with a carpet of moss. The bitter oranges, more fair and golden and much larger than the sweet fruit, hung in bunches that weighed down the branches and seemed almost to cast a glow in the deep shade.

From this cool retreat we worked our way to a more open upland, where a few scattered pitch-pines cast a meagre shadow. The ground was sandy, sometimes bearing a little wire-like grass, with here and there some pretty wild-flowers of unfamiliar form and unknown names, and at other points covered with the saw-palmetto, a low connection of the more lofty cabbage-palm, so called from a row of saw-like teeth on each edge of its flat stem. The leaves were about shoulder high, rendering it prudent to keep hands and gun elevated to avoid sharp rasps from the serrated stems.

Our course led along the edge of a cypress-swamp, keeping a few rods from it. As we followed along after the hounds, which were now slowly beating about under the low growth, we gained from our companions some idea of “jumping deer.” The deer, here very numerous, hide and harbor in the swamps during the day. At

night they come into the "pine open" to feed, returning leisurely as dawn approaches, leaving on the dew a trail that remains until the sun is well up. The hounds strike this scent, and dashing into the swamp alarm the deer in their midday repose. They will not run long in the wet ground where vines and canes hamper them, but break out and make for the scrub islands, which are upland thickets of thorn and rough low trees, amid which they find refuge, and rarely leave them. As the only chance of shooting them is between the swamp and the scrub, it is not desirable that the dogs should be speedy or staunch. Half-bred hounds or even curs are the best, as they soon abandon the trail and return to follow another one into the low ground. As we came where game was expected, we separated to cover a long interval between the cypress and the thickets, and walked slowly on, waiting to hear from the hounds. It was not long before their exciting tones were heard, when we stood motionless by pine-stems for concealment, and listened eagerly to gain an idea when the game would break cover. It was not our luck to see this chase, as the baying hounds swept around a low hill to a point where Lee had gone, and our only knowledge of its ter-

mination came from the report of his gun and a distant whoop of exultation announcing his success.

The dogs remained with Lee until he came in, bearing a fat young buck, which was concealed from the keen eyes of the buzzards by a covering of palmetto-leaves, when we went on as before. The dogs followed a number of trails, but no deer came out for a long time ; and we were about turning back when a large buck burst from the swamp with a hound at his heels and almost jumped over Foster, who pitched up his gun and fired within a few feet ; but the buck saw the sudden movement and dodged so quickly that a shot through his ear was Foster's only mark. Now sadly frightened, he sailed over the palmetto-leaves running between us, so that for a moment I dared not fire, but could only watch his graceful bounds, until, when out of range of the guide, I sighted him on a bound, and he did not gather his feet under him again, but fell in a merciful death. He was old and gray, large and tough, a wary old fellow, with splendid horns, and he had probably made many an escape from hounds or from a more fatal enemy,— the panther.

It was now midday and the grass too dry to

retain a trail, so we made our way back to our boat: the guides staggering under the loads of game, while I found load enough in adding their ponderous guns to my own.

We rowed back to the yacht and found that some fish had been taken, while the engineer came in with a wild-cat he had shot as it was skulking along the river's edge seeking fish.

We lunched under the bearded oak, and then Madame started on a shopping expedition in the yacht to Volusia, seven miles down the river, to get fresh supplies for the domestic department of the boat.

White and lesser herons were lighting on some trees in some low islands not far away, seeming preparing to roost there; so embarking again in a boat, I had Foster leave me concealed among the overhanging vines, where I crouched down with a vivid sensation that it was just the haunt for moccasins and alligators. After the boat was far away, groups of heron swept around and over the island, scanning it with keen eyes, only to wing their way on as if uncertain; but as night came on, the desire to roost there overcame their suspicions, and they came thick and fast, giving me numerous shots more or less favorable. When

Foster came for me, we gathered in a number, losing one that we fancied an outlying alligator took.

The plumage of the white heron, or "angel bird," fills one with endless admiration, so pure and light are its sprays. These birds were taken in with all possible care as valued specimens, and were free from stains. Laying them in careful order, we started to pull back to meet our steamer. The darkness came, and we were well on our way before her light was seen. She came after us, but we told old Paul to leave us to row to Orange Bluff, so she turned about and went dashing by us, leaving us rocking in her wake.

She was tied fast when we came to her; and calling for a light, we came quietly alongside, holding our white birds up to show like phantoms against the darkness. They were hung in the cabin, much to the delight of our little passenger, whose fancy was charmed with the beautiful birds. Orange Bluff we found very pleasant; and the kind-hearted resident of the place offering to take us in with his family, we concluded to send the yacht home and enjoy his hospitality.

The fishing was excellent, and from here we made excursions of very great interest. Two In-

dian mounds are here, of marked character, which have been examined by various ethnologists.

And thus passed our days on the great St. Johns,—idle days, but full of varied interests, that did not fail to charm us until the time came to return to busy scenes and engrossing occupations in the North,—feeling that one can hardly go amiss if prepared to seek natural interests, and leave Saratoga trunks, watering-place amusements and dissipations behind. Those who want the resources of fashion will do well to linger in Jacksonville or gay St. Augustine, and leave yachting and Bohemianism to the easily pleased lovers of wild-life.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BIRCH BARK.

FAR back in the Canada Bush the Magnetawan is a silver cord in the forest on which are strung, like pearls, a few beautiful lakes where in the autumn the brilliant-hued maples and sumachs flaunt their gaudy colors before a background of black spruces, green hemlocks and sombre pines. For many a sinuous mile the river winds without a rapid, reflecting unbroken woodland of endless beauty ; all the eye sees is nature, so wild, undisturbed and impressive that it would seem rude desecration to launch on the surface of the mirror-like water any but a birch-bark canoe. A boat would do violence to the charming repose ; but a

birch-bark rests on the water like an autumn-leaf, the ripples caress its graceful curves with a low murmur; breaths of air waft the fragile form to and fro, while it mingles the tints of its dull silver sides with the water-grasses and overhanging foliage without seeming to break the soft-color harmonies in their perfection.

The Adirondack boat has style in every line, but the oarsman is laboring before one all the time. The crisp waves that are cast aside by the sharp bow are a little too energetic, there is a faintly suspicious business purpose in their rustle, and too much reality mingles in the dream, as in it the rambler follows the lines of the lake beaches or the windings of the streams.

There is dash and spirit in the cat-boat as she casts spray half-mast high and shoots with shivering sail into the teeth of a squall; there is a rush that thrills one when a yacht lies low with singing cordage; there is a fascination in standing on the bridge of a leviathan steamer as she rises to the rhythm of huge ocean billows; there are intense sensations in the sweep of the Mackinaw boat: but all must give way to the birch-bark, the wild woodland's aquatic creation, one that we feel could fly like a bird or bound like a fawn,

were not its own motion so much more graceful and stealthy.

In retrospect I summon memories of many a gypsy outing. The bayous, where the palmetto-leaves rustle under bearded cypresses, fill my mind with memories of great beauty; the gray cliffs of the Sierra are not forgotten, nor are the towering forms of the great trees that adorn their rocky sides, nor the peaks of the Rocky Mountains where the snow drifted over me as a blanket, welcome for the warmth it assured,—all are dreams of grand scenes that revive associations of deep impress, while with them come recollections of Nova Scotia lakes, Adirondack streams and sea-beach encampments; but still more full of the romance that seems apart from reality are the thoughts of canoeing back in “the bush” on the Magnetawan.

I am again in fancy seated in the bow on the folded camp blankets, with a back-rest formed of the tent canvass,—a nest of complete luxury. A rifle lies before me across the withes that form the gunwales, ready for snap-shots, and the canoe moves from the camping-place. My Canadian voyageur is a powerful man, a skilful paddler. His paddle rarely rises from the water,

so no sound of falling drops is audible; it has a long, steady sweep that moves the frail bark along like an animate impulse, one that seems to suggest neither labor nor fatigue.

Thus in quiet we steal along; the river unfolding in curves of graceful contour a succession of views that comprise all the wild-wood features that charm the lover of solitude. Signs of animal occupation abound, while the scars of the axe are not present to suggest the desolation that follows the woodsman. Boughs cut by the beaver only float on the stream, peeled of their bark for food by the sharp teeth of these industrious animals.

Otter-slides — steep, smooth and slippery — are seen on the banks, where these beautiful animals slide for fun and plunge at the end into the stream,—real tobogganing parties by moonlight, with no reporters present. Bruin, too, rambles along the margins of the river, now and then standing up to a tree to bite out a piece of bark as high as he can reach, leaving the white wood exposed, his challenging gauntlet, which in the etiquette of the forest means, “This is my territory; if you cannot take a bite higher and bigger than this, just keep away or there’ll be trouble bruin.”

At intervals of a few miles, ospreys choose tall trees for their watch-towers, from which they launch themselves like winged arrows into the water, casting showers of spray high in the air, rising with laborious pinions, often holding a captured fish in their talons, which they bear away in triumph if no rival makes contest for the promised feast. They are birds of great dash and courage, and as they sail in graceful aerial circles are objects of constant interest.

Our canoe stealing shadow-like along the winding stream was a most startling apparition to the clumsy and not over-keenwitted muskrats, who failed to recognize it as other than a forest feature until actually upon them, when they quite atoned for their lack of alertness by sudden energy in plunging under water, where they remained in terrified concealment until we were far away.

Peeled twigs set along the banks were trappers' marks; silently stealing around a point, we came upon an Indian family in their canoe, the squaw using the paddle with skill, while the Indian lifted his traps, which were chained to the white wands. An infant aborigine shared the center of the canoe with a heap of dead muskrats the color of his own wild skin.

A few interesting lakes are reached by the sinuous Magnetawan, where bold islands afford charming camping-retreats. On one of these islands we grounded our birch-barks, and established a camp where we idled days away, revelling in the bracing autumn air, gazing on the crimson maples flaming in startling contrast to the somber pines and spruces, and occasionally hunting. Deer were very abundant, indeed: quite as many were brought to camp in our canoes as we could use, hungry as we were from the wild-life that so rapidly restores vital energy and renders health, not merely freedom from illness, but a positive physical condition of keen animal enjoyment.

With a canoe one can steal into the recesses of the wilderness without snapping a twig or rustling a leaf, so that a keen eye can peer into the homes and mysteries of bird and animal life with the consciousness of being part of the wild scenes that ever charm the lover of undisturbed nature.

It was in a canoe of the frailest form that the writer once rested his paddle while a friend was playing a large and gamey trout, one so strong that he pulled the light craft along the shore of a wild-wood pond until it floated close to a deer

that with dainty footsteps was stepping into the crystal water for his sunset drink. The beautiful animal was not alarmed, we had no desire to injure it, and it gazed on us with wide-eyed wonder until a dash of the desperate trout startled it. A long graceful bound,—and it was over the low shrubs, safe in the dark forest.

It is now difficult to enjoy actual canoeing in perfection without going far into the wilds of Maine or the Canadas. Skiffs have replaced them on the few rivers that are free enough from dams and wire fences to permit easy voyaging, and few guides are obtainable that can propel them in perfect silence, no water dropping from the thin paddle-blade and no gurgling eddies from its powerful use.

The modern canoe is a beautiful achievement in many exquisite forms, and probably offers the most agreeable method of nomadic rambling, as thousands of brave and hundreds of fair canoeists can testify ; but the birch-tree, that has been a forest feature for hundreds of unrecorded years, gave the Indian a light shell for his frail water creation that art can never equal. It is of the woodland, bearing the mottled sunlight on its gleaming sides, the dampness of deep shade in

tiny mosses that cling to the curving sheets of bark : while the free spirit of wild-life is in every graceful line. Seen amid civilized surroundings, it brings the remote woodland streams to mind with vivid suggestion ; seen amid the lights and shadows of the Northern rivers, it tells a story of stealthy motion that ever charms the real woodsman, who never goes so far towards the sources of unknown streams that he does not feel that his birch-bark could yet bear him into still greater seclusion. The daintiest Rob Roy is an invader in following a forest river to its source of moss-and-fern surrounded springs ; but the birch-bark is not : as it flits like a shadow from the broad stream to the amber-colored rivulet, it is not intruding, — it is simply going home.



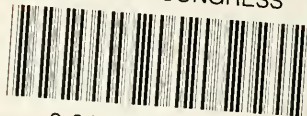




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